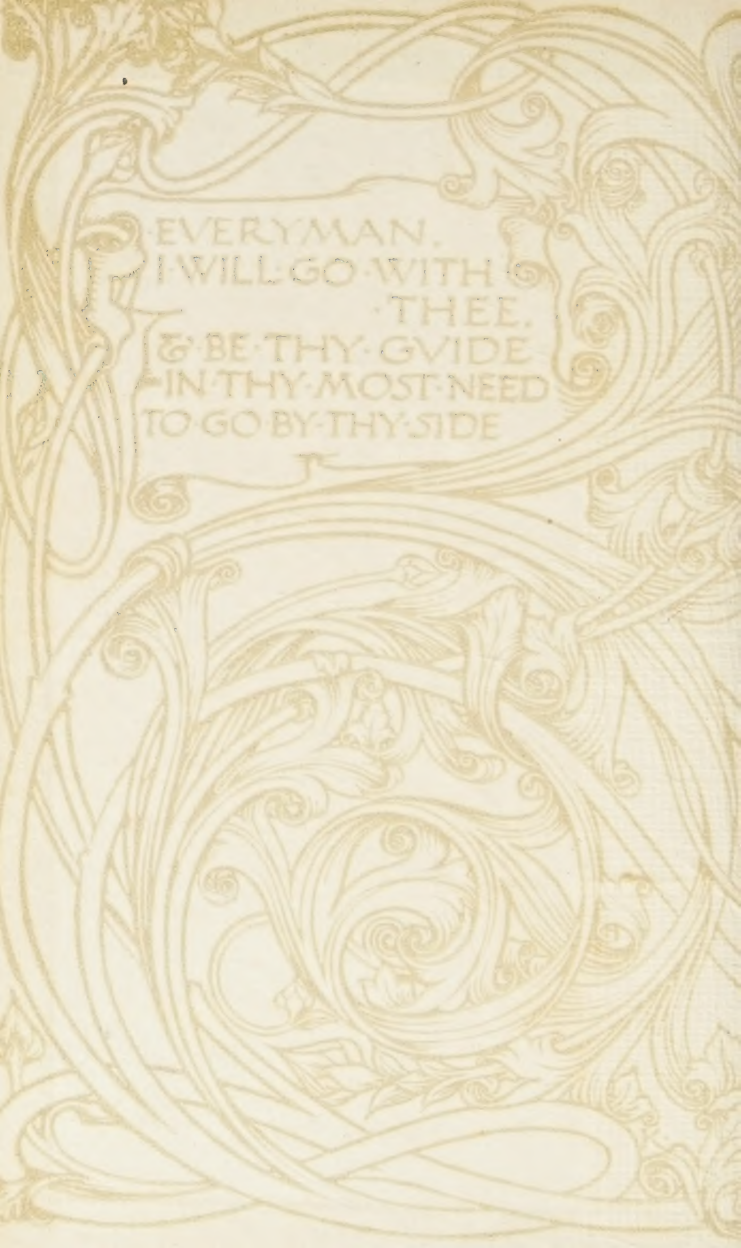
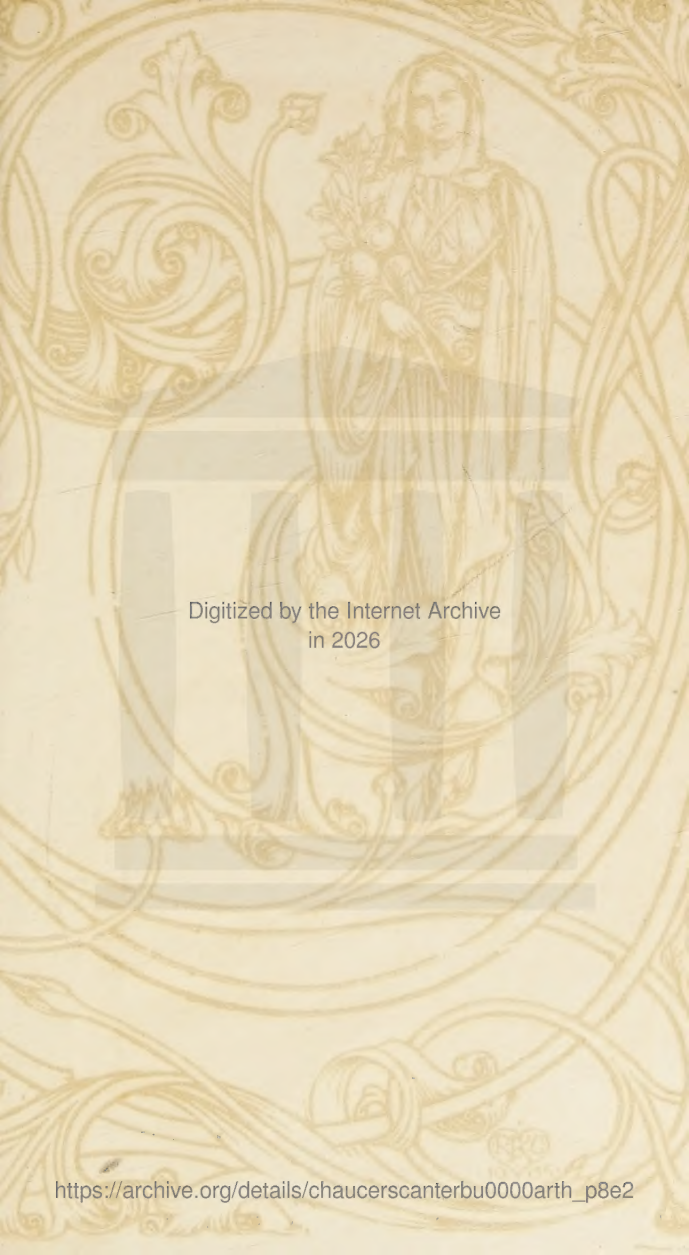

EVERYMAN,
I WILL GO WITH
THEE,
& BE THY GVIDE
IN THY MOST NEED
TO GO BY THY SIDE



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/chaucerscanterbu0000arth_p8e2

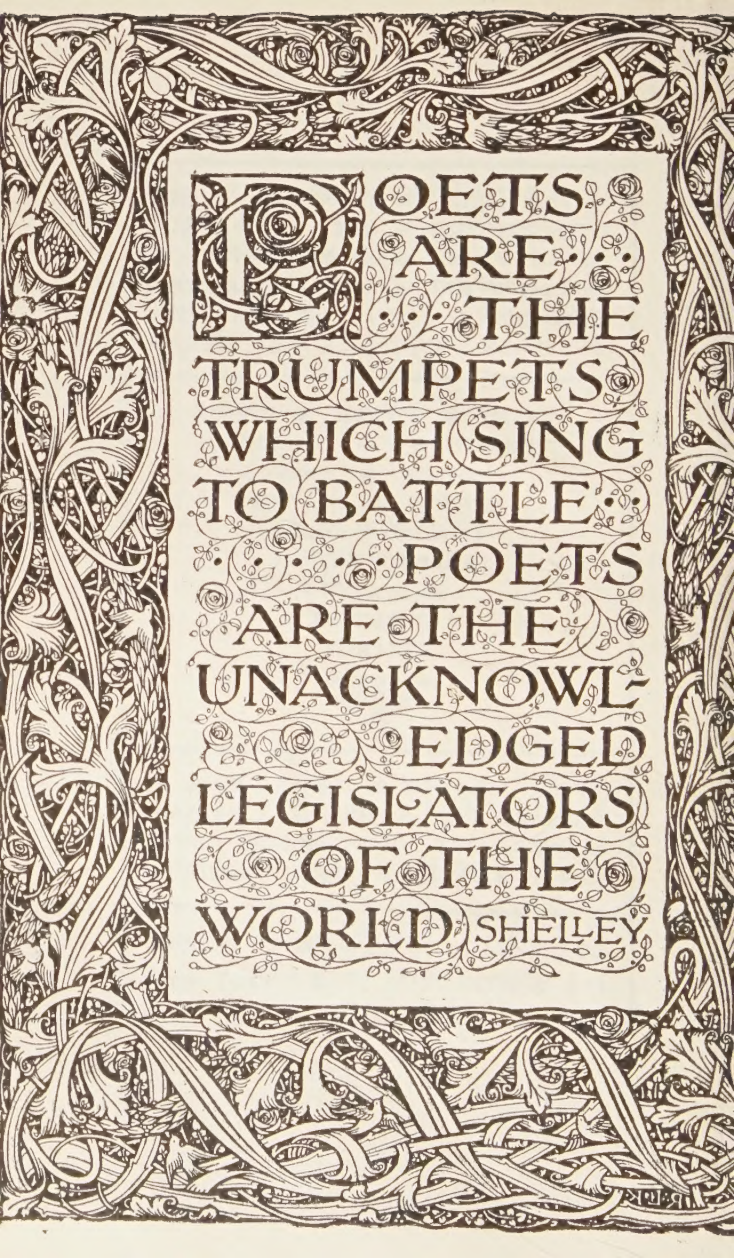
Sheila E. Munro

Va.

EVERYMAN'S LIBRARY
EDITED BY ERNEST RHYS

POETRY AND
THE DRAMA

CHAUCER'S CANTERBURY
TALES, PREPARED AND EDITED
BY ARTHUR BURRELL, M.A.


POETS ARE THE TRUMPETS WHICH SING TO BATTLE POETS ARE THE UNACKNOWLEDGED LEGISLATORS OF THE WORLD SHELLEY

CHAUCER'S CANTERBURY TALES for the Modern Reader

Prepared & Edited by ARTHUR BURRELL, M.A.

LONDON & TORONTO
PUBLISHED BY J. M. DENT & SONS LTD. & IN NEW YORK BY E. P. DUTTON & CO.

First Issue of this Edition . 1908
Reprinted 1909, 1910, 1913,
1915, 1919

INTRODUCTION

Was never eye did see that face,
  Was never ear did hear that tongue,
Was never mind did mind his grace,
  That ever thought the travail long;
But eyes and ears and every thought
Were with his sweet perfections caught.
(*From* LOWELL'S ESSAY.)

THIS preface and this book are not meant for the scholar who reads his Middle English with ease, nor again for the student who wishes to delve into the grammar and the syntax of fourteenth-century English. Rather are they meant for those many people who have not read, who say they cannot read, Chaucer.

For, let writers deny it as they will, to the modern Englishman, and still more to the modern Englishwoman, Chaucer is a sealed book. A few lines here and there are clear enough—but then the reader is pulled up sharp and has to refer to notes and glossary; and the man who sets out for enjoyment, will not for long turn aside to notes and glossary, however well they may be supplied. If it were not so, if this contention were not true, Professor Skeat would not have thought it necessary to publish a modern version of the beautiful Knightes Tale.

The understanding of Chaucer and the love of him (the two go together) are not very old. Neither Addison nor Pope could appreciate him, and it is well known into what Dryden turned the tales. But attempts have been made to bring Chaucer nearer to the people. Charles Cowden Clarke "purified" him; others modernised his spelling; others again so altered him in modernising him that the poet was unrecognisable. Not one of these versions has succeeded. It is a bold thing to hope to prosper where so many have failed; but the present editor is bound to explain—and to defend—his method.

To begin with, certain tales, seven out of the twenty-four, have been left untouched. They are so broad, so plain-spoken, that no amount of editing or alteration will make

them suitable for the twentieth century. To these my preface makes no further reference. But in regard to the other seventeen, I may say that, first, the spelling has been slightly modernised, modernised just enough to leave its quaintness and take away some of its difficulty. To take a well-known passage and compare the ordinary version with the present version:—

Ther saugh I first the derke imagining
Of felonye and al the compassyng;
The cruel ire reed as any glede;
The pykepurs and eek the pale drede;
The smyler with the knyf under the cloke;
The shepne brenning with the blake smoke;
The treson of the mordring in the bedde;
The open werre with woundes al bibledde;
Contek with blody knyf and sharp manace
Al ful of chirking was that sory place.

Ther saw I first the dark imaginyng
Of felony, and al the compassyng;
The cruel wrath, as eny furnace red;
The pickepurs, and eke the pale Dread;
The smyler with the knyf under his cloke;
The stables burnyng with the blake smoke
The treson of the murtheryng in the bed;
The open warres, with woundes al y-bled;
Conflict with bloody knyf, and sharp menace.
Al ful of shriekyng was that sory place.

Again, difficulties of vocabulary have been treated in the same way. There is no pretence that this version is the Chaucer of the scholar, or the Chaucer of any recognised text; and I give an instance as before, comparing the ordinary version with that printed in this volume:—

The sleere of him-self yet saugh I ther
His herte-blood hath bathed al his heer
The nayl y-driven in the shode a-night;
The colde deeth with mouth gaping upright.
Amiddes of the temple sat meschaunce
With discomfort and sory contenaunce
Yet saugh I woodnesse laughing in his rage
Armed complaint, out-hees, and fiers outrage
The careyne in the bush with throte y-corve
A thousand slayn and nat of qualm y-storve;
The tiraunt with the prey by force y-raft
The toune destroyed ther was nothing laft.
Yet saugh I brent the shippes hoppesteres;
The hunte strangled with the wilde beres;
The sowe freten the child right in the cradel
The cook y-scalded for al his longe ladel
Noght was foryeten by th' infortune of Marte:
The carter over-riden with his carte
Under the wheel ful lowe he lay adoun.

The slayer of himself yet saw I ther,
His herte-blood hath bathèd al his hair;
The nayl y-dryven in the skull at nyght;
The colde deth, with mouth gapyng upright.
In midst of al the temple sat meschaunce,
With sory comfort and evil countynaunce.
Ther I saw madness laughyng in his rage;
Armèd complaint, alarm and fierce outrage.
The body in the bushe, with throte y-bled:
A thousand slayne, and none of sickness dead;
The tiraunt, with the prey bi force y-refte;
The toune distroyèd, there was no thing lefte.
Ther burnt the shippes daunsyng up and doun;
Ther dyed the hunter by the wilde lion:
The sowe eatyng the child right in the cradel;
The cook y-skalded, for al his longe ladel.
Nought was forgot the ill-fortune of Mart;
The carter over-ridden by his cart,
Under the wheel ful lowe he lay adoun.

Again, some care has been taken to preserve Chaucer's melody. The italicised "e" is to be very lightly sounded, so lightly that the sound is hinted at rather than heard, and the pronunciation of this gently-dropping "e" is the pronunciation of the "a" in the word "china," *when the reader whispers the word "china."* With this simple rule, the Chaucerian line, an ordinary line of ten syllables, will be found to be generally musical and again and again to be music itself. For, to be thoroughly appreciated, the Tales must be read aloud.

I have now explained my offence. I have done no more than many other modernising editors, except for this, that the version I submit to the reader is, I hope, nearer to Chaucer than theirs. And to the modern reader I leave it, adding the beautiful words which Lowell says should be the inscription on Chaucer's works—words which, from Chaucer's own pen, best describe the pleasure that awaits in every age the reader of the "Canterbury Tales":—

Through me men go into that blisful place
Of hertes helth, and dedly woundes cure;
Through me men go unto the welle of Grace
Where grene and lusty May shal ever endure.
This is the way to al good aventure.
Be glad, then, reader, and thy sorrow off-caste,
Al open am I, pass in and speed thee faste.

Of Geoffrey Chaucer little is known. He is said to have been born in 1340, and his life ended with the century. At the age of seventeen he was in the service of an aristocratic house, and two years later he was fighting in France, where

the Hundred Years War had began. He was taken prisoner, but was soon ransomed, and before the age of thirty he had married (probably a lady whose sister was John of Gaunt's wife) and was again fighting in France. Thus, already, courtly houses, captivity, the humours and horrors of war were known to him by experience; and of all of them he writes vividly in the Knightes Tale and in many other places. Very soon afterwards we find Chaucer engaged on foreign missions—sometimes in Italy, sometimes in France; and his first civil employment was that of Comptroller of Customs in London. At the age of forty-six Chaucer sat in the Parliament as a knight of the shire for Kent, and later he received an appointment as Clerk of the King's Works. From this time to his death he was again and again in straits for money, and he seems always to have been anticipating or selling such pensions as he had. He died in 1400. The piety of Nicholas Brigham (1556) built or rebuilt his tomb in Westminster Abbey, and no more fitting line could have been engraved on it than the one chosen, "*Requies aerumnarum mors*": or as Chaucer himself writes it:—

Deth is the end of every worldly sore.

The motto and the other lines on the tomb sadly need regilding. Above the tomb is the Chaucer window.

It is customary to speak in all prefaces of Chaucer's humour and of his power as a narrator; now and then a critic like Lowell (in "My Study Windows") lays deserved stress on the melody of his verse. But it is difficult to know where to begin when we enumerate Chaucer's excellencies, and instead of this, let us see him as he is. In the Tales he stands self-revealed; and the rest of this introduction is but an attempt to show the real Chaucer, by calling attention to a few lines in which his own heart speaks.

Before all else we must recognise his delight in life:—

When that Aprille with his showres swoot
. . . . . .
Whan smale fowles maken melodie.

and again:—

Herken these blisful briddes how they sing,
And see the fresshe floures how they spring.
Ful is mine heart of revel and solas.

Spring is part of him:—

> The busy larke, the messenger of day,
> Saluteth in her song the morning gray;
> And fyry Phœbus ryseth up so bright
> That al the orient laugheth for the sight;
> And with his stremes drieth in the greeves
> The silver dropes hanging on the leeves.

Although on ordinary days he may sit over his book "as dumb as any stone," yet when nature smiles he is up and away:—

> Farewel, my book—and my devocioun.

Other poets write about the beauties of the outer world. To none of them does Chaucer yield, and as a lover of sunlight, of birds, of the golden world he stands with the Psalmists and with Wordsworth. Along with this gladness are the deeper notes. How strange to find in Chaucer the sadness of life and the wistful outlook on "the sombre sides of man's destiny":—

> What is this world? what asken men to have?
> Now with his love, now in the colde grave
> Alone, withouten any company.

The old man, weary of his life, cries to the young revellers:—

> And deth, alas, he wil not have my life,
> Thus walk I like a restéless caitiff;
> And on the ground which is my mothers gate
> I knocke with my staf both erly and late,
> And say, "O deere mother, let me in."

The dying knight, who has won all that he desired and who died in sight of his heaven, is one more instance of the sadness of destiny:—

> Dusked his eyen two and failed his health,
> But on his lady yet he caste his eye.
> His laste word was, "Mercy, Emelye."

Throughout the Tales "man goeth forth to his work and to his labour—until the evening." Yet nothing escapes Chaucer's humour. He will not even let himself escape: he must needs give us a humorous description of Geoffrey Chaucer:—

What man art thou? quoth he,
That lookest as thou woldest finde an hare,
For ever upon the ground I see thee stare.
Approche near and loke up merrily.
Now ware you, sirs, and let this man have place,
He in the waist is shaped as wel as I;
This were a poppet in the arm to embrace
For any womman smal and fair of face.

He admits he has written on several subjects:—

But Chaucer though he can but ignorantly
On metres and on ryming craftily
Hath said it—in such English as he can.

Yet when he consents to tell the rest of them a tale, obviously a travesty of medieval romances, the Host stops him in the middle of a line:—

No more of this, for Goddes dignitee,
Quoth oure hoste, for thou makest me
So weary of thy verray lewednesse
Mine eares achen at thy drasty speche
This may wel be rime doggerel, quoth he.

Chaucer has not done laughing at himself, for he proceeds to tell in his own person the Tale of Melibeus—long, dull, and in prose. Did ever poet so trouble to hold himself up to ridicule? His sly eye roves over all his world and even over the animals—the Prioresse's smale houndes, the fox, the crow, the chanticleer who reads Dan Cato and who quotes Latin, all supply him with mirth. But how he delights in making fun of his woman world. The Prioresse herself, the immortal Wife of Bath, and the fierce wife of the Host are all in turn butts for his quiet arrows. The termagant mistress Host is doughtier far than her husband.

When I bete my knaves,
She bringeth me forth the grete clobbed staves
And crieth, "Slay the dogges every one
And break them bothe back and every bone.
Allas," she saith, "that ever I was shape
To wed a milksop or a coward ape.
By corpus bones I will have thy knife
And thou shalt have my distaff and go spinne."

Chaucer knows the frailty, the wrath, the vengeance of women: he knows too what they want above any earthly thing:—

Some saide women loven best richés,
Some saide honour, some saide jollinesse.

But he knows better:—

> " My liege lady, generally," quoth he,
> " Women desiren to have SOVEREIGNTEE,
> As wel over their husband as their love
> And for to be in mastery them above."

It is quite true: the women themselves acknowledge it:—

> In al the court there was not wif or mayde
> Or widow that contraried what he saide.

But he hastens elsewhere to apologise:—

> I can no harm of no woman divine.

The whole of the Pardoner's Tale, prologue, tale, and epilogue, is a masterpiece of Chaucerian humour. The Pardoner in his prologue gives away his profession and pours ridicule upon himself; then he tells an excellent story, and with the very last word turns his own preaching into a farce. Indeed, all of Chaucer's " church gallery " laugh at themselves or make us laugh at them; Friar, Pardoner, Summoner, Prioresse, Monk; only in pathetic and earnest contrast is the poor Parson, who wrought first and taught afterwards.

The descriptions in the Prologue teem with humorous touches. The Prioresse speaks excellent " Stratford " French; the Monk doesn't care a plucked hen for the text that contemns the worldly prelate; " and I said his opinion was good." The Friar's eyes twinkle like stars when he has sung one of his love songs; the merchant always profits by money-exchange; the Clerk is as lean as a rake; the Lawyer seems busier than he is; the Sailor rides " as he could "; the Doctor believes in prescribing " gold " in sickness; the Wife of Bath has been five times married " withouten other companye in youthe "; the Miller (drunk) brings them out of town to the sound of a bagge-pipe; the Summoner has three words of Latin—which he ventures on when he has had his " strong wyn red as blood "; the Pardoner's pockets are full of relics come from Rome al hot. Here are but a few phrases. It is as though the poet said, " Come, laugh with me: life is merry. Come, weep with me: life is sad. Come, love with me: life is short."

For this is Chaucer's secret: he loves; and it is this that makes him so lovable a poet. No student of the Canter-

bury Tales can escape from this reflection. Chaucer loves the Knight and the young Squire and the poor Parson. He loves and understands children, and in this respect he stands almost alone among the poets. The death of the little child in the Prioresses Tale wrings from him passionate tears; the girl Griselda, the child of Constance, are but two in his child gallery. He loves good women: he loves the Virgin Mary: and he loves Jesus Christ. Respect, admiration, even worship we find in many writers: in Chaucer they are all there, but above all *Amor vincit omnia*.

Mention has been made of Chaucer's good-humoured laughter at the Wife of Bath: but, if one trait stands out above all others in his work it is his worship of good women. No one can read the Canterbury Tales without being struck with the idealism which has created Griselda, Constance, Emelye. We may find rarely in Homer, Virgil, Dante, Shakespeare, pictures which crowd to the memory when Chaucer is describing the ladies of his dreams. All of them pale, of course, before Griselda, of whom he writes the immortal verses:—

And shortly forth this tale for to chase
I say that to this newe marquisesse
God hath such favour sent her of his grace
That it seemed not by any likeliness
That she was born and fed in rudenesse
As in a cottage or an oxestalle
But nourished in an emperoures halle.

To every wight she waxed is so dear
And worshipful that folk where she was born
And from her birthe knew her year by year
Scarce trowed they but durst have boldly sworn
That to Janicle of which I spak biforn
No daughter was she for as by cónjecture
They thought she was another créature.

For though that ever vertuous was she,
She was encresèd in such excellence
Of maners goode i-set in high bountee,
And so discret and fair of eloquence,
So benigne and so digne of reverence,
And coude so the peples hert embrace
That ech her loveth that loketh in her face.

Nought only of Saluces in the toun
Publisshèd was the bountee of her name,
But eek byside in many a regioun
If one sayd wel, another sayd the same.
So spredde wide her bountee and her fame,
That men and wommen, as wel younge as olde,
Go to Saluces upon her to byholde.

Not only this Griseldes through her witte
Knew al the ways of wifly homlynesse,
But eek when that the tyme required it
The comun profit coude she wel redresse.
There was no discord, rancour, or hevynesse
In al that lond that she coude not appese,
And wisly bring them alle in rest and ese.

Though that her housband absent were anon,
If gentilmen or other of her countree
Were wroth, she wolde brynge them at one,
So wyse and rype wordes hadde she
And judgement of so gret equitee.
That she from heven sent was, as men wende,
Peple to save and every wrong to amende.

The reason, I think, can easily be found. All good women are to Chaucer reflections of the Virgin Mary, who is "the lady bright," the "haven of refuge," the "bright star of day," the "glory of motherhood." She is eternal womanhood in heaven. The Clerkes Tale alone lifts the woman of the Middle Ages above the elegancies of Herrick, above the passion of Byron, above the calm honours of Tennyson, and the critical or whole-hearted admiration of Browning. Not even in Shakespeare do we find such an abandonment of worship as we do here. Women have not yet learnt to study the women of Chaucer, their own poet, their defender, and their glory. If apology be needed for the poet's coarseness, let the white figures of Constance, Emelye, and Griselda atone.

From whom are we to get the truer Chaucer? From the biographers or from the Tales themselves? I think from the latter. If so, what do we find? A man liking a broad tale (as men generally do) and able to say it in language which does not suit our more decent century; a man revelling in the sunlight; a hero worshipper, but far more a heroine worshipper; laughing with, at, and against himself and his characters; full of good advice intended for any who will take it—including himself; a moralist, but no preacher; a lover of life and joy, of sorrow and of death; an aristocrat sympathising with the poor and the downtrodden; the burden of whose cheery teaching may be given in his own lines:—

That thee is sent, receive in buxomnesse,
The wrestling with the world axeth a fal
. . . . . .
Hold the high way and let thy spirit thee lead
And Truth shal thee deliver, it is no drede.

1908. A. BURRELL.

Scholars are not agreed on all points as regards the chronology of Chaucer's works. The following arrangement is that given conjecturally by Prof. Skeat in his edition of the poet's works:—

Romaunt of the Rose, in part preserved, and the ABC, early poems; Book of the Duchess, Life of Saint Cecyle, 1369; Palamon and Arcite, Complaint to Pity, Anelida and Arcite, 1372-3; Translation of Boethius, 1377-8; Complaint of Mars, 1379 (?); Troylus and Cryseyde, 1379-83; Parlement of Foules, 1382; House of Fame, 1383-4; Legend of Good Women, 1385-6; Canterbury Tales, begun 1386; Treatise on the Astrolabe, 1391. Two early works are lost, and one partly preserved in the Man of Law's Tale.

Many minor poems are included in Chaucer's works.

Works: Thynne, 1532; Tyrwhitt, 1775, etc.; Skeat, 6 vols., 1894, and "Student's Chaucer," 1895; Pollard, Heath, Liddell, McCormick, 1901.

The Chaucer Society has published parallel texts of Chaucer's works, and autotype editions of some of the chief MSS., also "Chronology of Chaucer's Works," by Koch, 1890.

Life: J. Saunders, 1845; T. Markly, "Life and Poetry of Chaucer," Lecture, 1858; Ward (English Men of Letters), 1879; Lennsbury, "Studies in Chaucer," etc., 1892; "Life-Records of Chaucer," Chaucer Society, 1900; Ames, "Chaucer Memorial Lectures," 1900; Tuckwell (Miniature Series of Great Writers), 1904. See also the "Dictionary of National Biography" and editions of works.

CONTENTS

The Tales modernised by the Editor are indicated by an asterisk (*)

	PAGE
*The Prologue	1
*The Knightes Tale	21
The Mylleres Tale	74
The Reeves Tale	92
*The Man of Lawes Tale	103
The Schipmannes Tale	131
*The Prioresses Tale	141
The Tale of Sir Thopas	148
*The Tale of Melibeus	153
*The Monkes Tale	191
*The Nonne Prestes Tale	213
*The Tale of the Doctor of Phisik	229
*The Pardoneres Tale	236
*The Tale of the Wyf of Bathe	252
The Freres Tale	282
The Sompnoures Tale	292
*The Clerkes Tale	308
The Marchaundes Tale	337
*The Squyeres Tale	366
*The Frankeleynes Tale	383
*The Seconde Nonnes Tale	405
*The Canones Yeomans Tale	419
*The Mauncyples Tale	441
*The Persones Tale	450

THE CANTERBURY TALES

THE PROLOGUE

WHEN that Aprille with his showres swoot
The drought of Marche hath perced to the root,
And bathed every veyn in suche licour,
From which vertu engendred is the flour;
When Zephirus eek with his swete breeth
Inspired hath in every holte and heeth
The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
Hath in the Ram his halfe course runne,
And smale fowles maken melodie,
That slepen al the night with open eye,
So pricketh them nature in their corages:—
Thenne longen folk to go on pilgrimages,
And palmers for to seeken strange strandes,
To distant seintes, known in sondry landes;
And specially, from every shires ende
Of Engelond, to Canturbury they wende,
The holy blisful martir for to seeke,
That them hath holpen when that they were seeke.

Byfel that, in that seson on a day,
In Southwerk at the Tabbard as I lay,
Redy to wenden on my pilgrimage
To Canturbury with ful devout corage,
At night was come into that hostelrie
Wel nyne and twenty in a companye,
Of sondry folk, by aventure i-falle
In felowshipe, and pilgryms were they alle,
That toward Canturbury wolden ryde.
The chambres and the stables weren wyde,
And wel we weren lodged at the beste.
And shortly, when the sonne was to reste,
So hadde I spoken with them everyone,
That I was of their felowshipe anon,

And made covenant erly to aryse,
To take oure weye where I shal you devyse.
But nonetheles, whiles I have tyme and space,
Or that I ferther in this tale pace,
Me thinketh it according to resoún,
To telle you alle the condicioún
Of eche of them, so as it semèd me,
And who they weren, and of what degree;
And eek in what array that they were inne:
And at a knight than wil I first bygynne.

A KNIGHT ther was, and that a worthy man,
That from the tyme that he ferst bigan
To ryden out, he lovèd chyvalrye,
Trouth and honoúr, fredóm and curtesie.
Ful worthi was he in his Lordes warre,
And thereto had he riden, noman so farre,
As wel in Cristendom as hethenesse,
And ever honoured for his worthinesse.
At Alisandre he was when it was wonne,
Ful ofte tyme he hadde the feast begunne
Aboven alle the Knights that were in Pruce.
In Lettowe had he ridden and in Ruce
No cristen man so ofte of his degree.
In Gernade at the siege eek had he be
Of Algesir, and riden in Belmarie.
At Lieys was he, and at Satalie,
When they were wonne; and in the Grete see
At many a noble landyng had he be.
At mortal batailles had he been fiftene,
And foughten for oure feith at Tramassene
In lystes thrice, and ever slayn his foe.
This same worthi knight had ben also
Somtyme with the lord of Palatye,
Ageynst another hethen in Turkye:
And evermore he hadde a sovereyn price.
And though that he was worthy he was wyse,
And of his port as meke as is a mayde.
He never yet no vilonye had sayde
In al his lyf, unto no manner of wight.
He was a very perfit gentil knight.
But for to telle you of his array,
His hors was good, but yet he was not gay.
Of fustyan he ware a cote pleyn

Whereon his hauberk left ful many a stain.
For he was late come from his voyáge,
And wente for to do his pilgrimáge.
With him ther was his sone, a yong SQUYER,
A lover, and a lusty bacheler,
With lokkes curled as if they lay in presse.
Of twenty yeer he was of age I gesse.
Of his stature he was of even lengthe,
And wondrous quik he was, and gret of strengthe.
And he had been somtyme in chivalrye,
In Flaundres, in Artoys, and in Picardie,
And born him wel, though in so litel space,
In hope to standen in his ladies grace.
Embroidred was he, as it were a mead
Al ful of fresshe floures, white and red.
Syngynge he was, or flutynge, al the day;
He was as fressh as is the month of May.
Short was his goune, with sleeves long and wyde.
Wel coud he sitte on hors, and faire ryde.
He coude songes make and wel endite,
Joust and eek daunce, and wel purtray and write.
So much he lovèd, that by nightertale
He slept nomore than doth a nightyngale.
Curteous he was, lowly, and servisable,
And carved byfore his fader at the table.
A YEOMAN had he, and servántes nomo
At that tyme, for him liste ryde so;
And he was clad in cote and hood of grene,
A shef of pecok arrows bright and kene
Under his belte he bare ful thriftily.
Wel coude he dresse his tackel yeomanly;
His arrows droopèd nought with fetheres low.
And in his hond he bare a mighty bowe.
A round-hed had he with a broun viságe.
Of woode-craft wel knew he al the uságe.
Upon his arme he bar a gay bracer,
And by his side a swerd and buckeler,
And on that other side a gay daggere,
Adornèd wel, and sharp as poynt of spere;
A buckle on his brest of silver shene.
An horn he bare, the girdle was of grene;
A forester was he soothly, as I gesse.
Ther was also a Nonne, a PRIORESSE,

That of her smylyng was ful symple and coy;
Her grettest oth was only—by seynt Loy;
And she was namèd madame Englentyne.
Ful wel she sang the servises divyne,
Entunèd in her nose ful seemely;
And Frensh she spake ful faire and sweetely,
After the scole of Stratford-atte-Bowe,
For Frensh of Parys was to her unknowe.
At mete wel i-taught was she in all;
She let no morsel from her lippes falle,
Nor wet her fyngres in her sauce deepe.
Wel coude she carie a morsel, and wel keepe,
That never drope upon her brest should be.
For al her thoughte was sett on curtesie.
Her overlippe wypèd she so clene,
That in her cuppe was no ferthing sene
Of greese, when she dronken hadde withinne.
Ful semely to ete she did beginne.
And certeynly she was of gret disport,
And ful plesánt, and amyable of port,
And peynèd her to counterfete cheere
Of court, and to be stately of manére,
And to be holden digne of reverence.
But for to speken of her conscience,
She was so charitable and so piteous,
She wolde weepe if that she saw a mous
Caught in a trappe, if it were ded or bledde.
Of smale houndes had she, that she fedde
With rosted flessh, and mylk, and wastel breed.
But sore wepte she if one of them were ded,
Or if men smote it with a stikke smerte:
And al was conscience and tendre herte.
Ful semely her cloke i-pynchèd was;
Her nose streight; her eyen grey as glas;
Her mouth ful smal, and therto soft and red;
But certeynly she hadde a fair forheed.
It was almost a spanne broad, I trowe:
For verrily she was not undergrowe.
Ful faire was her robe, as I was war.
Of smal corál aboute her arme she bare
A paire of bedes, the greatest were of grene;
And theron hung a broch of gold ful shene,
On which was first i-writ a crownèd A,

And after, *Amor vincit omnia.*
Another NONNE also with her had she,
That was her chapelleyn, and PRESTES three.
A MONK ther was, wel fit for sovereyntee,
An out-rydere, that lovèd venerye;
A manly man, to be an abbot able.
Ful many a dainty hors had he in stable:
And whan he rode, men might his bridel here
Jyngle in a whistlyng wynd so cleere,
And eek as loude as doth—the chapel belle.
Where that this lord was keper of the celle,
The rule of seynt Maure or of seint Beneyt,
Bycause that it was old and somwhat streyt,
This ilke monk let pass the olde day,
And helde after the newe time alway.
He gaf nat for that text a pullèd hen,
That seith, that hunters be no holy men;
Nor that a monk, when he is cloysterless,
Is likened to a fisshe that is watirless,
This is to sey, a monk out of his cloystre.
But that same text held he not worth an oystre.
And I seide his opinioun was good.
Why! shulde he studie, and make himselve wood,
Uppon a book in cloystre alway to pore,
Or diggen with his handes, and laboúre,
As Austyn bad? How shal the world be served?
Lat Austyn have his toil to him reserved.
Therefore a horsman ever he was aright;
Greyhoundes he had as swifte as fowl in flight;
Of prickyng and of huntyng for the hare
Was his delight, for no cost wolde he spare.
I saw his sleves rounded at the hand
With fur, and that the fynest in the land.
And for to fastne his hood under his chyn
He hadde of gold y-wrought a curious pyn:
A love-knotte in the gretter ende ther was.
His heed was bald, and shon as eny glas,
And eek his face as he had been anoynt.
He was a lord ful fat and in good poynt;
His eyen bright, and rollyng in his heed,
That stemèd al as doth a furnace red;
His bootes souple, his hors in gret estate.
Now certeinly he was a fair prelate;

He was not pale as a for-pynèd ghost.
A fat swan loved he best of eny roast.
His palfray was as broun as is a berye.
A FRERE ther was, a wanton and a merye,
A prechour, and a ful solemne man.
In alle the ordres foure is non that can
So moche of daliaunce and fair langáge.
He had i-made many a mariáge
Of yonge wymmen, at his owne cost.
Unto his ordre he was a noble post.
Ful wel biloved and familiar was he
With frankeleyns everywhere in his cuntree,
And eek with worthi wommen of the toun:
For he hadde power of confessioún,
As seyde himself, more than a curáte,
For of his ordre he was licenciat.
Ful sweetly herde he their confessioún,
And plesaunt was his absolucioún;
He was an esy man to geve penance
When that he thought to have a good pitance
For unto a poore ordre for to give
Is signe that a man is wel i-shrive.
For if he gaf, he dorste make avaunt,
He wiste that a man was répentaúnt.
For many a man so hard is of his herte,
He may not wepe though he sore smerte.
Therfore in-stede of wepyng and prayéres,
Men may give silver to the pore freres.
His typet was ay stuffèd ful of knyfes
And pynnes, for to give to faire wyfes.
And certaynly he hadde a mery note.
Wel coude he synge and pleyen on a flute.
Of songes he bar utterly the price.
His nekke whit was as the fluer-de-lys.
Therto he strong was as a champioún.
He knew the tavernes wel in every toun,
And every ostiller or gay tapstere,
Better than lazars or the pore beggere,
For unto such a worthi man as he
It was not right, as by his facultee,
To have with such sick lazars áqueyntaúnce.
It is not honest, it may not advaunce,
For a good Frere to dele with such poraile,

But al with riche and sellers of vitaille,
And specially when profyt shulde arise.
Curteous he was, and gentil of servyse.
Ther was no man nowher so vertuous.
He was the beste begger in al his hous,
For though a widewe hadde but one shoe,
So plesaunt was his *In principio*,
Yet wolde he have a ferthing ere he wente.
His begging was far better than his rente.
And rage he coude and pleye right as a whelpe,
In love-dayes coude he people helpe.
For then was he not like a cloysterer,
With a thredbare cope as a pore scolér,
But he was like a maister or a pope.
Of double worsted was his semy-cope,
That round was, as a belle, out of the presse.
Somwhat he lipsed, for his wantounesse,
To make his Englissh swete upon his tunge;
And in his harpyng, when that he hadde sunge,
His eyen twynkled in his hed aright,
As do the sterres in the frosty night.
This worthi prechour was y-called Huberd.
A Marchaunt was ther with a forked berd,
In motteleye, and high on horse he sat,
Uppon his hed a Flaundrish bever hat;
His botes buckled faire and properly.
His resons spak he ful solemnely,
Touching alway the encrease of his wynnyngs.
He wolde the see were guarded for his thinges
Betwixe Middulburgh and Orewelle.
Wel coude he in eschange sheeldes selle.
This worthi man ful wel his wittes sette;
Ther wiste no man that he was in dette,
So éstately was he of governaunce,
With his bargayns, and with his sufficience.
For sothe he was a worthi man withalle,
I know not, sooth to say, what men him calle.
A Clerk ther was of Oxenford also,
That unto logik had long tyme i-go.
As lene was his hors as is a rake,
And he was not right fat, I undertake;
But lokede hollow, and therto soberly.
Ful thredbare was his overest cloke to see,

For he hadde nought geten him a benefice,
Nor was so worldly to have high office.
For he wold rather have at his beddes hed
Twenty bookes, clothed in blak and red,
Of Aristotil, and his philosophie,
Then robes riche, or fiddle, or psaltery.
But although that he were a philosóphre,
Yet had he but a litul gold in cofre;
But al that he might gete, and his frendes sent,
On bookes and his lernyng he it spent,
And busily gan for the soules pray
Of them that gaf him money to scolay.
Of studie tooke he most cure and most heede.
Not one word spak he more than was need:
Al that he spak it was of heye prudence,
And short, and quyk, and ful of gret sentence.
Sowndynge in moral virtu was his speche,
And gladly wolde he lerne, and gladly teche.

A Sergeant of Lawe, wys and war,
That often hadde ben wher lawyers are,
Ther was also, ful riche of excellence.
Discret he was, and of gret reverence
He semèd such, his wordes were so wise.
Justice he was ful often in assise,
By patent, and by pleyn commissioún;
For his science, and for his high renoun,
Of fees and robes had he many a one.
So gret a lawyer was there nowher noon.
Al was fee symple to him in effecte,
His word of law might never be suspecte.
Nowher so busy a man in eny case,
And yet he semèd busier than he was.
In termes of lawe had he the judgementes al,
That from the tymes of kyng Will were falle.
Thereto he coude endite, and make a thing,
Ther coude no man blame aught of his writyng.
And every statute coude he pleyn by rote.
He rode but hoomly in a medly cote,
Girt with a girdle of silk, with barres smale;
Of his array telle I no lenger tale.

A Frankeleyn ther was in our companye
White was his beard, as is the dayesye.
Of his complexioun he was sangwyn.

Wel loved he in the morn a sop of wyn.
To lyven in delite he loved allone,
For he was Epicurus owne son,
That held opynyoun that pleyn delite
Was verrily felicitee perfyt.
An housholder, and that a gret, was he;
Seynt Julian he was in his countree.
His bred, his ale, was alway best of al;
His store of wyn was known in special.
Withoute bake mete never was his hous,
Of flessh and fissh, and that so plentyous,
It snowèd in his hous of mete and drynk,
And alle deyntees that men coude thynk.
After the sondry sesouns of the yeer,
He chaungèd them at mete and at soper.
Ful many a fat partrich had he in mewe,
And many a bream and many a luce in stewe.
Wo was his cook, unless his sauce were
Poynant and sharp, and redy al his gear.
His table dormant in his halle alway
Stood redy covered al the longe day.
At sessions there was he lord and sire.
Ful ofte tyme he was knight of the shire.
A dagger and a wallet al of silk
Heng at his gerdul, white as morning mylk.
A shirreve and a counter hadde he ben,
Was nowher such a worthi Frankeleyn.
An Haberdassher and a Carpenter,
A Webber, a Dyer, and a Tapicer,
Were with us eek, clothed in one lyveree,
Of a solemne and gret fraternitee.
Ful fressh and newe their gear y-trimmèd was;
Their knyfes were y-sette nat with bras,
But al with silver wrought ful clene and faire,
Their gurdles and their pouches every where.
Wel semèd eche of them a fair burgeys,
To sitten in a gildehalle on the dais.
Every man for the wisdom that he can,
Was fitted for to be an alderman.
For money hadde they inough, and rente,
And eek their wyfes wolde it wel assente;
And else certeyn had they ben to blame.
It is right fair for to be clept madame.

And for to go to churches al byfore,
And have a mantel roially i-bore.
A Cook thei hadde with them for the nonce,
To boyle chikens and the marrow bones,
And to make powders swete and tasten wel.
Wel coude he knowe a draught of London ale.
He coude roste, sethe, broille, and frie,
Make soupe and brawn and bake wel a pye.
But gret harm was it, as it semèd me,
That on his shin a sore wound had he;
For blankemange he made with the beste.
A Shipman was ther, dwellyng far by weste:
For ought I wot, he was of Dertemouthe.
He rode upon a hackneye, as he coude,
In gowne woollen falling to the knee.
A dagger hangyng on a lace had he
Aboute his nekke under his arm adoun.
The hot somér had made his hew al broun;
And certeinly he was a good feláwe.
Ful many a draught of wyn had he y-drawe
From Burdeaux-ward, whil that the merchant sleep.
Of nyce conscience took he no keep.
If that he foughte, and had the higher hand,
By water he sente it home to every land.
But of his craft to reckon wel the tydes,
His stremes and his dangers al bisides,
His harbour and his moone, his pilotage,
Ther was none such from Hulle to Cartage.
Hardy he was, and wys to undertake;
With many a tempest hath his beard ben shake,
He knew wel alle the havenes, as thei were,
From Scotlond to the cape of Fynestere,
And every creek in Bretayne and in Spayne;
His barge y-clepèd was the Magdelayne.
Ther was also a Doctour of Phisík,
In al this worlde was ther non him like
To speke of phisik and of surgerye;
For he was grounded in astronomye.
He kepte his pacient wondrously and wel
In al houres by his magik naturel.
Wel coude he gesse the ascending of the star
Wherein his patientes fortunes settled were.

He knew the cause of every maladye,
Were it of cold, or hete, or moyst, or drye,
And where they engendred, and of what humoúr;
He was a very parfit practisour.
The cause once knowen and his right measúre,
Anon he gaf the syke man his cure.
Ful redy hadde he his apothecaries,
To sende him drugges, and electuaries,
For eche of them made the other for to wynne;
Their frendshipe was not newe to begynne.
Wel knew he the old Esculapius,
And Deiscorides, and eek Rufus;
Old Ypocras, Haly, and Galien;
Serapyon, Razis, and Avycen;
Averrois, Damascen, and Constantyn;
Bernard, and Gatisden, and Gilbertyn.
Of his diete mesuráble was he,
For it was of no superfluitee,
But of gret norishing and digestible.
His studie was but litel on the Bible.
In blue he clad was al and in sangwyn
Lynèd with taffata and silke thin.
And yit he was but esy in dispence;
He kepte that he won in pestilence.
For gold in phisik is a cordial;
Therfore he lovèd gold in special.

A good Wif of beside Bathe ther was,
But she was ever somwhat def, allas.
In cloth-makýng she had such judgement,
She passèd them of Ypris and of Ghent.
In al the parrissh wyfe was ther none
That to the altar byfore hir shulde goon,
And if ther dide, certeyn so wroth was she,
That she was thenne out of alle charitee.
Her kerchiefs weren al ful fyne of grounde;
I durste swere they weigheden ten pounde
That on a Sonday were upon her hed.
Hir hosen were of fyne scarlett red,
Ful streyt y-tyed, and shoes ful moyste and newe
Bold was hir face, and fair, and red of hewe.
She was a worthy womman al her lyfe,
Husbondes at chirche dore hadde she fyfe,
Withouten other companye in youthe;

But thereof needeth nought to speke the truth;
And thrice she had ben at Jerusalem;
She hadde passèd many a strange streem;
At Rome she had ben, and at Boloyne,
In Galice at seynt Jame, and at Coloyne.
She knewe moche of wandrying by the weye.
Big-toothèd was she, sothly for to seye.
Upon an amblere esely she sat,
Clokèd ful wel, and on her hed an hat
As brood as is a buckler or a targe;
A foot-mantel aboute her hippes large,
And on her feet a paire of spurres sharpe.
In felawshipe wel coude she laughe and carpe.
Of remedyes of love she knew parchaunce,
For of that art she knew the olde daunce.

A good man was ther of religioún,
And was a poore PARSON of a town;
But riche he was of holy thought and werk.
He was also a lernèd man, a clerk
That Cristes gospel gladly wolde preach;
His parishioners devoutly wolde he teach.
Benigne he was, and wondrous diligent,
And in adversitee ful pacient;
And such he was i-provèd ofte to be.
To cursen for his tithes ful lothe was he,
But rather wolde he given out of doute,
Unto his pore parishioners aboute,
Of his offrynge, and eek of his substaunce.
He coude in litel thing have sufficience.
Wyd was his parish, and houses far asonder,
But yet he lafte not for reyne or thonder,
In siknesse and in meschief to visíte
The ferthest in his parisshe, smal and great
Uppon his feet, and in his hand a staf.
This noble ensample unto his sheep he gaf,
That ferst he wroughte, and after that he taughte,
Out of the gospel he those wordes caughte,
And this figúre he addid yet therto,
That if gold ruste, what shulde iron do?
For if a priest be foul, on whom we truste,
No wonder if the ignorant shulde ruste;
And shame it is, if that a priest take kepe,
A dirty shepperd and a clene shepe;

Wel oughte a priest ensample for to give,
By his clennesse, how that his sheep shulde lyve.
He sette not his benefice to hire,
And lefte his sheep encombred in the myre,
And ran to Londone, unto seynte Paules,
To seeken him a chaunterie for soules,
Or with a brothurhood to be withholde;
But dwelte at hoom, and kepte wel his folde,
So that the wolfe made it not myscarye.
He was a shepperde and no mercenarie;
And though he holy were, and vertuous,
He was to sinful man ful piteous,
Nor of his speche wrathful nor yet fine,
But in his teching discret and benigne.
To drawe folk to heven by clenenesse,
By good ensample, was his busynesse:
But were it eny person obstinat,
What-so he were of high or lowe estat,
Him wolde he snubbe sharply for the nonce.
A bettre priest I trowe ther nowher non is.
He wayted after no pompe nor reverence,
Nor made himself spicèd in conscience,
But Cristes love, and his apostles twelve,
He taught, and ferst he folwed it himselve.
With him there was a PLOUGHMAN, was his brother,
That hadde i-lad of dung ful many a fother.
A trewe worker and a good was he,
Lyvynge in pees and perfit charitee.
God loved he best with al his trewe herte
At alle tymes, though he laughed or smerte,
And thenne his neighebour right as himselve.
He wolde thresshe, and therto dyke and delve,
For Cristes sake, with every pore wight,
Withouten hyre, if it laye in his might.
His tythes payèd he ful faire and wel,
Bothe by his owne work and his catel.
In a round coat he rode upon a mare.
There was also a reeve and a mellere,
A summoner and a pardoner also,
A manciple, and my-self, ther was no mo.
The MELLERE was a stout carl for the nones,
Ful big he was of braun, and eek of bones;

And proved it wel, for everywhere he cam,
At wrastlynge he wolde bere awey the ram.
He was short shuldred, broode, a thikke feláw,
There was no dore he coude not heave and drawe
Or breke it at a runnyng with his hed.
His beard as eny sowe or fox was red,
And therto brood, as though it were a spade.
Upon the cop right of his nose he had
A werte, and theron stood a tuft of heres,
Red as the berstles of a sowes eeres.
His nose-trilles blake were and wyde.
A swerd and bocler bar he by his side,
His mouth as wyde was as a gret forneys.
He was a jangler, and a singer of lays,
And that was most of synne and harlotries.
Wel coude he stele corn, and profit thrice;
In profit he hadde a thombe of gold alway.
A whit cote and a blew hood wered he.
A baggepipe coude he blowe and sowne,
And therwithal he brought us out of towne.

A gentil MANCIPLE was ther of a temple,
Of which al buyers mighten take exemple
For to be wys in buyyng of vitaille.
For whether that he payde, or took by taille,
Ever he watchèd so to buy or sell,
That he was ay bifore and farèd wel.
Now is not that of God a ful fair grace,
That such a simple mannes wit shal pass
The wisdom of an heep of lerned men?
Of mastres hadde he mo than thrice ten,
That were of lawe expert and curious;
Of which there were a doseyn in an hous,
Al worthi to be stiwards of rente and lond
Of any lord that is in Engelond,
To make him lyve by his propre good,
In honour detteles, unless he were wood,
Or lyve as scarsly as he can desire;
And able for to helpen al a shire
In any case that mighte happe or falle;
And yit this manciple past the wit of all.

The REEVE was a slendre colerik man,
His beard was shave as nigh as ever he can.
His heer was by his eres rounde i-shorn.

His top was dockèd lyk a priest biforn.
Ful longe were his legges, and ful lene,
Al like a staff, ther was no calf y-sene.
Wel coude he kepe a garner and a bynne;
Ther was no auditour coude from him wynne.
Wel wiste he by the drought, and by the reyn,
The yeeldyng of his seed, and of his greyn.
His lordes sheep, his cattle, his dayerie,
His swyn, his hors, his store, and his poultrie,
Was wholely in this reeves governynge,
And as he seyd so was the rekenynge,
Since that his lord of age was twenti yeer;
There coude noman bringe him in arrear.
Bailiff and herd and men of al degree,
Knewen ful wel his sleight and subtiltee;
They were adread of him, as of the deth.
His dwellyng was ful fair upon an hethe,
With grene trees i-shadewed was his place.
He coude bettre than his lord purcháce.
Ful riche he was i-storèd privily,
His lord wel coude he plese subtilly,
To geve and lend him from his owne good,
And have a thank, a cote, and eek an hood.
In youthe he hadde ben a good werker;
He was a wel good wright, a carpenter.
This reeve sat upon a wel good stot,
That was a pomely gray, and namèd Scot.
A long surcote of blew uppon he hadde,
And by his side he bar a rusty blade.
Of Northfolk was this reeve of which I telle,
Byside a toun men callen Baldeswelle.
Tuckèd he was, as is a friar, aboute,
And ever he rood the hynderest of the route.

A Summoner was with us in that place,
That hadde a fyr-red cherubynes face,
For spotted al he was, with eyen narrow.
As hot he was, and lecherous, as a sparrow,
With roughe browes blak, and shorte berd;
Of his viságe children were sore afeard.
No quyksilver, litarge, nor bremstone,
Boras, ceruce, nor oille of tartre none,
Nor oyntement that wolde clense and byte,
Might ever help him of his whelkes white,

Or of the knobbes sittyng on his cheekes.
Wel loved he garleek, oynouns, and eek leekes,
And for to drinke strong wyn red as blood.
Thenne wolde he speke, and crye as he were wood.
And when that he wel dronken had the wyn,
Than wolde he speke no word but Latyn.
A fewe termes had he, tuo or three,
That he hadde lernèd out of som decree;
No wonder is, he herde it al the day;
And eek he knowe wel, how that a jay
Can clepe "Watte," as wel as can the king.
But who-so wolde him try in other thing,
Thenne hadde he spent al his philosophie,
Ay, *Questio quid juris*, wolde he crye,
He was a gentil felaw and a kynde;
A bettre summoner shulde men nowher fynde.
He wolde suffre for a quart of wyn
A good felawe to have his concubyn
A twelve month, and excuse him utterly.
And fooles coude he deceive privily.
And if he fond somewhere a good feláwe,
He wolde teche him for to have no awe
In such a case of the archedeknes curse,
Unless a mannes soule were in his purse;
For in his purs he sholde punysshed be.
"Thy purse and money is thy hell," quoth he.
But wel I wot he lyèd right in dede;
For cursyng ought each gilty man to drede;
Cursing wil slay and bring damnation;
Bewar of excommunication.
In his control he hadde at his assise
The yonge wommen of the diocise,
And knew their counseil, and their every nede
A garland had he set upon his hed,
As gret as it were for an alehouse-stake;
A buckler had he made him of a cake.

With him there rood a gentil PARDONER
Of Rouncival, his friend and his compeer,
That streyt was comen from the court of Rome.
Ful loude he sang, Come hider, love, to me.
This summoner sang to him in deepe tone,
Was nevere trumpe of half so gret a soun.
This pardoner had heer as yellow as wex,

But smothe it hung, as doth a strike of flex;
By ounces hunge his lokkes that he hadde,
And therwith he his shuldres overspredde.
Ful thinne it lay, in lengthes, one by one,
And hood, for jolitee, werèd he none,
For it was trussèd up in his wallet.
He thought he rode al of the newe set,
Disheveled, save his cappe, he rode al bare.
Suche glaryng eyen hadde he as an hare.
A Christes image hung upon his cappe.
His wallet lay byfore him in his lappe,
Brim-ful of pardouns come from Rome al hot.
A voys he had as smale as eny goat.
No beard had he, nor never beard sholde have,
As smothe it was as it ware late i-shave;
I trow he were a geldyng or a mare.
But of his craft, from Berwyk unto Ware,
Ther was not such another pardoner.
For in his bag he hadde a pilow there,
Which that he saide, was oure Ladys veyl:
He seide, he hadde a gobet of the seyl
That seynt Peter hadde, when that he wente
Uppon the see, til Jhesu Crist him hente.
He hadde a cros of brasse ful of stones,
And in a glas he hadde pigges bones.
But with these reliques, whenne that he found
A pore persoun dwellyng uppon ground,
Upon a day he gat him more moneye
Than that the parsoun gat in monthes tweye.
And thus with feynèd flaterie and japes,
He made the parsoun and the people his apes.
But trewely to tellen at the laste,
He was in churche a noble ecclesiaste.
Wel cowde he rede a lessoun or a storye,
But best of al he sang an offertorie;
For wel knew he, when that the song was songe,
He muste preche, and wel affyle his tunge,
To wynne silver, as he right wel coude;
Therefore he sang ful merily and loude.

Now have I told you shortly in a clause
Thestate, tharray, the nombre, and eek the cause
Why that assembled was this companye
In Southwerk at this gentil ostelrie,

That highte the Tabbard, faste by the Belle.
But now is tyme to you for to telle
How that we bare us in that same night,
When we were in that ostelrie alight;
And after wil I telle of oure viáge,
And al the remnaunt of oure pilgrimage.
But ferst I pray you of your curtesie,
That ye ne think it not my vilanye,
Though that I speke al pleyn in this matére,
To tellen you their wordes and their cheere;
Nor though I speke their wordes properly.
For this ye knowen al-so wel as I,
Who-so shal telle a tale after a man,
He moste reherce, as nigh as ever he can,
Every word, if it be in his charge,
Though speke he never so rudely nor so large;
Or else must he telle his tale untrewe,
Or feyne thing, or fynde wordes newe.
He may not spare, though he were his brother;
He moste as wel say one word as another.
Crist spak himself ful broade in holy writ,
And wel ye wot no vilanye is it.
Eke Plato seith, who-so that can him rede,
The wordes must be cosyn to the dede.
Also I pray you to forgeve it me,
If I have folk not set in their degree
Here in this tale, as that they shulde stonde;
My wit is thynne, ye may wel understonde.
Greet cheere made oure host us every one,
And to the souper sette he us anon;
And servèd us with vitaille as he could,
Strong was the wyn, and wel we drynken wolde.
A semely man oure oste was withalle
For to have been a marchal in an halle;
A large man was he with eyen deep,
A fairere burgeys is ther noon in Chepe:
Bold of his speche, and wys, and wel i-taught,
And of manhoode lakkèd he right naught.
Eke therto he was right a mery man,
And after soper playen he bygan,
And spak of myrthe amonges other thinges,
When that we al hadde made our rekonynges;
And sayde thus: "Lo, lordynges, trewely

Ye be to me right welcome hertily:
For by my trothe, if that I shal not lye,
I never saw so mery a companye
At one time in this harbour as is now.
Fayn wold I do you merthe, wiste I how.
And of a merthe I am right now bythought,
To do you ese, and it shal coste nought.
Ye go to Caunturbury; God you speede,
The blisful martir give you al youre meede!
And wel I wot, as ye go by the weye,
Ye shapen you to talken and to pleye;
For trewely comfórt and merthe is none
To ryde by the weye domb as a stoon;
And therfore wil I make you some disport,
As I seyde erst, and do you som confórt.
And if you liketh alle by one assent
Now for to standen at my judgement,
And for to werken as I shal you seye,
To morrow, when ye riden by the weye,
Now by my fadres soule that is ded,
Save ye be merye, smyteth off myn hed.
Hold up youre hond withoute more speche."
Oure counseil was not longe for to seche;
Us thoughte it was not worth to say him nay,
And graunted him withoute more delay,
And bad him say his verdite, as him leste.
"Lordynges," quoth he, "now herken for the beste;
But take it not, I pray you, in disdayn;
This is the poynt, to speken short and playn,
That each of you to shorten this youre weie,
In this viáge, shal telle tales tweye,
To Caunturburi-ward, I mene it so,
And hom-ward he shal tellen other two,
Of áventúres that there have bifalle.
And which of you that bereth him best of alle,
That is to seye, that telleth in this case
Tales of best senténce and of soláce,
Shal have a soper at the cost of al
Here in this place sittynge in this halle,
When that we comen ageyn from Canturbery.
And for to make you the more mery,
I wil myselven gladly with you ryde,

Right at myn owen cost, and be youre gyde.
And who-so wile my judgement withseie
Shal paye for al we spenden by the weye.
And if ye vouchesafe that it be so,
Telle me anon, withouten wordes mo,
And I wil erly shape me therfore."
This thing was graunted, and oure othes swore
With ful glad herte, and prayden him also
That he would vouchesafe for to do so,
And that he wolde be oure governour,
And of our tales judge and réportour,
And sette a souper at a certeyn prys;
And we wolde rewlèd be at his devys,
In high and lowe; and thus by one assent
We be accorded to his judgement.
And therupon the wyn was fet anon;
We dronken, and to reste wente each one,
Withouten eny lengere taryinge.
And when the morning day bigan to sprynge,
Up rose oure ost, and broughte us out of sleep,
And gadered us togider alle in a heep,
And forth we riden a litel more than pace,
Unto the waterynge of seint Thomas.
And there oure ost bigan his hors areste,
And seyde, "Lordes, herken if you liste.
Ye wot youre covenant, and I it you recorde.
If eve-song and morning-song acorde,
Let see now who telle ferst a tale.
As evere I may drinke wyn or ale,
Who-so be rebel to my judgement
Shal paye for al that by the weye is spent.
Now draw the straws, ere that we forther win;
And he that hath the shortest shal bygynne."
"Sir knight," quoth he, "my maister and my lord,
Now draw the cut, for that is myn acord.
Come near," quoth he, "my lady prioresse;
And ye, sir clerk, let be your shamfastnesse,
Ne studie not; ley hand to, every man."
Anon to drawen every wight bigan,
And shortly for to tellen as it was,
Were it by áventure, or other case,
The sooth is this, the cut fil to the knight,

Of which ful glad and blithe was every wight;
And telle he moste his tale as was resoún,
By covenant and composicioún,
As ye have herd; what needeth worde mo?
And when this good man saw that it was so,
As one that wys was and obedient
To kepe his covenant by his free assent,
He seyde: "Since I shal then bygynne the game,
What! welcome be the cut, in Goddes name!
Now lat us ryde, and herken what I seye."
And with that word we riden forth oure weye;
And he bigan with right a merie chere
His tale, and seide right in this manére.

THE KNIGHTES TALE

Whilom, as olde stories tellen us,
Ther was a duk y-namèd Theseus;
Of Athens he was lord and governoúr,
And in his tyme such a conqueroúr,
That gretter was ther non under the sonne.
Ful many a riche contree had he wonne;
That with his wisdom and his chivalrie
He conquered al the realme of Femynye,
That whilom was i-clepèd Scythia;
And wedded hath the queen Hippolyta,
And brought her home with him to his contree,
With moche glorie and gret solemnitee,
And eek her yonge sister Emelye.
And thus with victorie and with melodye
Let I this noble duk to Athens ryde,
And al his host, in armes him biside.
And certes, were it not too long to heere,
I wolde have told you fully the manére,
How wonnen was the realm of Femenye
By Theseus, and by his chivalrye;
And of the grete bataille for the nonce
Bytwix Athénes and the Amazons;
And how besiegèd was Hippolyta,
The faire hardy queen of Scythia;

And of the feste that was at her weddynge,
And of the tempest at her home comynge;
But al that thing I most as now forbere.
I have, God wot, through a large feeld to fare,
And weake be the oxen in my plough,
The remnaunt of the tale is long inough;
I wol not stop a man of al this rowte
Lat every felawe telle his tale aboute,
And lat see now who shal the soper wynne,
And where I lafte, I wolde agayn begynne.
This duk, of whom I make mencioún,
When he was comen almost unto the toun,
In al his wealth and in his moste pryde,
He was war, as he cast his eye aside,
Wher that ther knelèd in the hye weye
A companye of ladies, tweye and tweye,
Ech like the other, clad in clothes blake;
But such a cry and such a wo they make,
That in this world no creätúre lyvýnge,
Hath herde such another lámentynge,
And of that cry stinten they never wolde,
Til they the reynes of his bridel holde.
" What folk be ye that at myn hom comynge
Perturben so my feste with cryénge? "
Quoth Theseus, " have ye so gret envýe
To myn honoúr, that thus compleyne and crie?
Or who hath you injúrèd, or offendid?
Nay tell it me if it may be amendid;
And why that ye be clad thus al in blak? "
The oldest lady of them alle spak,
When she hadde swownèd with a dedly chere,
That it was pity for to see or heere;
And seyde: " Lord, to whom Fortúne hath geven
Victorie, and as a conquerour to lyven,
Noughte greveth us youre glorie and honoúr;
But we beseechen mercy and socoúr.
Have mercy on oure wo and oure distresse.
Som drope of pitee, thurgh youre gentilnesse,
Uppon us wretchede wommen lat thou falle.
For certes, lord, ther is noon of us alle,
That hath not been a duchesse or a queene;
Now be we caytifs, as it is wel seene:
Thankèd be Fortune, and her false wheel,

That no estat assureth to be weel.
And certes, lord, to abiden youre presénce
Here in the temple of the goddesse Clemence
We have ben waytynge al this fourtenight;
Now helpe us, lord, since it is in thy might.
I wretche, which that wepe and waylle thus,
Was whilom wyf to kyng Capaneus,
That died at Thebes, cursed be that day,
And alle we that be in this array,
And maken alle this lamentacioun,
We lefte alle oure housbondes at the toun,
Whil that the siege ther aboute lay.
And yet the olde Creon, welaway!
That lord is now of Thebes the citee,
Fulfilde of ire and of iniquitee,
He for despyt, and for his tyrannýe,
To do the deede bodyes vilonýe,
Of alle oure lordes, which that be i-slawe,
Hath alle the bodies on an heep y-drawe,
And wil not suffre them by no assent
Neither to be y-buried nor i-brent,
But maketh houndes ete them in despite."
And with that word, withoute more respite,
They fillen flat, and criden piteously,
"Have on us wretched wommen som mercy,
And lat oure sorrow synken in thyn herte."
This gentil duke doun from his courser sterte
With herte piteous, when he herde them speke.
Him thoughte that his herte wolde breke,
Whan he saw them so piteous and so poor,
That whilom weren of so gret honoúr.
And in his armes he them alle up hente,
And them confórteth in ful good entente;
And swor his oth, as he was trewe knight,
He wolde do for them as wel he might
And on the tyraunt Creon vengeance take,
That al the people of Grece sholde speke
How Creon was of Theseus y-served,
As one that hath his deth right wel deserved.
And right anon, withoute more delaye
His baner he desplayeth, and took his waye
To Thebes-ward, and al his host bysyde;
Nor near Athenes wolde he go nor ryde,

Nor take his ese fully half a day,
But onward on his way that nyght he lay;
And sente anon Hippolyta to go,
And Emelye hir yonge sister too,
Unto the toun of Athenes for to dwelle;
And forth he rode; ther is no more to telle.
The red statúe of Mars with spere and targe
So shyneth in his white baner large,
That alle the feeldes gliter up and doun;
And by his baner was borne his pennón
Of gold ful riche, in which was set to view
The Minatour which that in Crete he slew.
Thus rode this duk, thus rode this conqueroúr,
And in his host of chevalrie the flour,
Til that he cam to Thebes, and alighte
Fayre in a feeld wher as he thoughe to fighte.
But shortly for to speken of this thing,
With Creon, which that was of Thebes kyng,
He faught, and slew him manly as a knight
In plain bataille, and putte his folk to flight;
And by assault he wan the citee after,
And rente doun bothe wal, and sparre, and rafter;
And to the ladies he restored agayn
The bones of their housbondes that were slayn,
To do exéquies, as was then the guise.
But it were al too long for to devyse
The grete clamour and the lámentynge
Which that the ladies made at the brennynge
Of the bodyes, and the grete honoúr
That Theseus the noble conqueroúr
Doth to the ladyes, when they from him wente.
But shortly for to telle is myn entente.
Whan that this worthy duk, this Theseus,
Hath Creon slayn, and Thebes wonne thus,
Stille in the feelde he took al night his reste,
And dide with al the contree as he list.
To ransake in the heap of bodyes dede
Them for to strip of harness and of wede,
The searchers diden businesse and cure,
After the bataile and discomfiture.
And so bifel, that in the heap they founde,
Thurgh pierced with many a grevous blody
wounde,

Two yonge knightes lying by and by,
Both in one coat of arms wrought richely;
Of whiche two, Arcite hight the one,
And the other knight was namèd Palamon.
Not fully quyk, nor fully deed they were,
But by their coat armure, and by their gear,
Heraldes knewe them wel in special,
As knights that weren of the blood royál
Of Thebes, and of sistren tuo i-born.
Out of the heap the searchers have them torn,
And have them caried softe unto the tente
Of Theseus, and ful sone he them sente
To Athenes, for to dwellen in prisoún
Perpetuelly, he wolde no ransóm.
And this duk when he hadde thus i-doon,
He took his host, and hom he rode anon
With laurel crownèd as a conqueroúr;
And there he lyveth in joye and in honoúr
Al through his lyf; what wille ye wordes mo?
And in a tour, in angwishe and in wo,
Dwell evermo wher gold may profit none
This Arcite and his felawe Palamon.
Thus passeth yeer by yeer, and day by day,
Til it fel once upon a morn of May
That Emelie, far fairer to be seene
Than is the lilie on her stalke grene,
And fressher than the May with floures newe—
For with the rose colour strove her hewe,
I know not which was fairer of them two—
Ere it was day, as she was wont to do,
She was arisen, and al redy dight;
For May wil have no sloggardye a nyght.
The sesoun priketh every gentil herte,
And maketh him out of his sleepe sterte,
And seith, "Arise, and do thin óbservance."
This makèd Emelye have rémembrance
To do honoúr to May, and for to ryse.
I-clothèd was she fressh for to devyse.
Her yellow hair was braided in a tresse,
Byhynde her bak, a yerde long I gesse.
And in the gardyn as the sonne upriste
She walketh up and doun wher as she liste.
She gathereth floures, party whyte and red,

To make a subtle gerland for her hed,
And as an angel hevenly she song.
The grete tour, that was so thikke and strong,
Which of the castel was the cheef dongeoun,
(Ther as this knightes weren in prisoún,
Of which I tolde yow, and telle shal)
Was evene joynyng to the garden wal,
Where as this Emely hadde her pleyynge,
Bright was the sonne, and cleer was the mornyng,
And Palamon, this woful prisoner,
As was his wont, by leve of his gayler
Was risen, and roamèd in a chambre on high,
Where he could al the noble citee espye,
And eek the gardon, ful of braunches grene,
In which that Emelye the fresshe and shene
Was in her walk, and romèd up and doun.
This sorweful prisoner, this Palamon,
Goth in the chambre roamyng to and fro,
And to himself complevnyng of his wo:
That he was born: ful oft he seyd, alas!
And so byfel, by áventure or case,
That thurgh a wyndow thikke and many a barre
Of iren greet and square as eny sparre,
He cast his eyen upon Emelya,
And therwithal he blinked and cryèd, a!
As that he stongen were unto the herte.
And with that crye Arcite anon up sterte,
And seyde, "Cosyn myn, what eyleth thee,
That art so pale and deedly for to see?
Why criedest thou? who hath thee doon offence?
For Goddes love, tak al in pacience
Oure prisoun, for it may non other be;
Fortune hath geven us this adversitee.
Som wikked aspect or disposicioún
Of Saturne, by sum constellacioún,
Hath geven us this, though gainst it we had
sworn;
So stood the heven when that we were born:
We moste endure it: this is the short and pleyn."
This Palamon answered, and seyde ageyn,
"Cosyn, for-sothe, of this opynyoún
Thou hast a veyn imaginacioún.
This prisoun caused me not for to crye.

But I was hurt right now thorough myn eye
Into myn herte, that wil my bane be.
The fairnesse of the lady that I see
Yonde in the gardyn roming to and fro,
Is cause of al my cryying and my wo.
I know not whether womman or goddesse;
But Venus is it, sothly as I gesse."
And therwithal on knees adoun he fel,
And seyde: "Venus, if it be youre wil
You in this gardyn thus to transfigúre,
Bifore me sorrowful wretched créatúre,
Out of this prisoun help that we may scape.
And if so be oure destynee be shape,
By word eterne to die in this prisoún,
On our lineáge have sum compassioún,
That is so lowe y-brought by tyrannye."
And with that word Arcite gan espye
Where that this lady roamèd to and fro.
And with that sight her beauty hurt him so,
That if that Palamon was wounded sore,
Arcite is hurt as moche as he, or more.
And with a sigh he seyde piteously:
"The fresshe beauty sleeth me suddenly
Of her that roameth yonder in the place;
And save I have her mercy and her grace
That I may see her beauty day by day,
I am but deed; ther is no more to seye."
This Palamon, whan he those wordes herde,
Dispiteously he lokèd, and answérde:
"Whether sayst thou in ernest or in pley?"
"Nay," quoth Arcite, "in ernest in good fey.
God helpe me so, ful loth am I to pleye."
This Palamon gan knytte his browes tweye:
"It would not be to thee a gret honoúr,
For to be false, and for to be traytoúr
To me, that am thy cosyn and thy brother
I-sworn ful deepe, and each of us to other,
That never even for death and for his paine,
Til life shal departe from us twayne,
Neyther of us in love to hynder other,
Nor in no other case, my deare brother;
But that thou shuldest trewly further me
In every case, and I shal further thee.

This was thyn othe, and myn also certáyn;
I wot right wel, thou darst it not withsayn.
Thus art thou sworn to help me out of doute.
And now thou woldest falsly be aboute
To love my lady, whom I love and seek,
And ever shal, until myn herte break.
Now certes, false Arcite, thou shalt not so.
I loved her first, and tolde thee my woe
That thou shouldst help me as my brother sworn
To further me, as I have told biforn.
For which thou art i-bounden as a knight
To helpe me, if it lay in thy might,
Or elsе thou art false, I dare wel sayn."
To this Arcite ful proudly spake agayn.
"Thou shalt," quoth he, "be rather false than I.
But thou art false, I telle thee utterly.
For *par amour* I loved her first ere thou.
What wilt thou sayn? thou knewest not yet now
Whether she be a woman or goddesse.
Thyn is affectioun for holynesse,
And myn is love, as for a creatúre;
For which I tolde thee myn áventúre
As to my cosyn, and my brother sworn.
Suppose, that thou lovedest her biforn;
Knowest thou not wel the olde clerkes saw,
That none shal geve a lover any lawe,
Love is a grettere lawe, by my pan,
Than may be given to any erthly man?
Therfore posityf lawe, and such decree,
Is broke alway for love in each degree.
A man must needes love when al is said.
He may nought flee it, though he shulde be deed,
Be she a mayde, or be she widewe or wyf.
And eke it is not likely al thy lyf
To standen in her grace, no more shal I;
For wel thou knowest thyselfin verity,
That thou and I be damnèd to prisoún
Perpetuelly, us gayneth no ransóm.
We stryve, as do the houndes for the bone,
They foughte al day, and yet their part was none;
Ther came a kyte, while that they were wrothe,
And bare away the bone betwixt them bothe.
And therfore at the kynges court, my brother,

Eache man is for himself, ther is no other.
Love if thou list; for I love and ay shal;
And sothly, deare brother, this is al.
Here in this prisoun muste we endure,
And each of us must take his áventúre."
Gret was the stryf and long bytwixe them tweye,
If that I hadde leisure for to seye;
But to the effect. It happèd on a day,
(To telle it you as shortly as I may)
A worthy duk that highte Peirithous,
That felaw was to the duk Theseus
Since that same day that they were children lyte,
Was come to Athenes, his felawe to visite,
And for to pley, as he was wont to do,
For in this world he lovèd noman so:
And he loved him as tenderly agayn.
So wel they loved, as olde bookes sayn,
That whan the oon was deed, sothly to telle,
His felawe wente and sought him doun in helle;
But of that story lyst me nought to write.
Duk Peirithous lovèd wel Arcite,
And hadde him known at Thebes yeer by yeer,
And fynally at réqueste and prayér
Of Peirithous, withouten any ransoúm
Duk Theseus him let out of prisoún,
Frely to go, wher that he list to dwell,
In such a gyse, as I shal pleynly tell.
This was the covenaunt, playnly to endite,
Betwixe Theseus and this Arcite:
That if so were, that Arcite were founde
Evere in his lyf, on any place or grounde,
In eny contree of this Theseus,
And he were caught, it was recorded thus,
That with a swerde sharpe he sholde dye;
Withouten any other remedy,
He took his leeve, and homward he him spedde;
Let him be war, in daunger lieth his head.
How gret a sorrow suffreth now Arcite.
The deth he feleth thorugh his herte smyte;
He weepeth, weyleth, cryeth piteously;
To slay himself he wayteth privily.
He seyde, " Allas the day that I was born!
Now is my prisoun werse than was biforn;

Now am I doomed eternally to dwelle
Not only in purgatorie, but in helle.
Allas! that ever I knewe Peirithous!
For else I had y-dwelt with Theseus
I-fetered in his prisoun for ever mo.
Than had I been in bless, and not in woe.
Only the sight of her, whom that I serve,
Though that her grace I may not even deserve,
Wold have sufficèd right ynough for me.
O dere cosyn Palamon," quoth he,
" Thyn is the victorie of this áventúre,
Ful blisfully in prisoun to endure;
In prisoun? day, certes in paradys
Wel hath fortune y-tornèd thee the dice,
That hath the sight of her, and I the absénce.
For possible is, since thou hast her presénce,
And art a knight, a worthi and an able,
That by som case, since fortune is chaungáble,
Thou maist to thy desir somtyme atteyne.
But I that am exilèd, and barren
Of alle grace, am in so gret despeir,
That neither water, erthe, nor fyr, nor air,
Nor creatúre, that of them makèd is,
May ever helpe or comfort me in this.
Wel ought I die in wanhope and distresse;
Farwel my lyf and al my jolynesse.
Allas! why blamen folk so in comúne
The providence of God, or else fortúne,
That giveth them ful ofte in many a gyse
Wel better than they can themselves devyse?
One man desireth for to have richésse,
That cause is of his murder or gret seeknesse.
And one man wolde out of his prisoun fayn,
That in his hous is by his servants slayn.
Infinite harmes be in this matére;
We never know what thing we prayen here.
We fare as he that dronke is as a mouse.
A dronke man wot wel he hath an hous,
But he not knoweth which the wey is thider,
And to a dronke man the wey is slider,
And certes in this world so faren we.
We seeken faste after felicitee,
But we go wrong ful ofte trewely.

Thus may we see alle day, and namely I,
That thought I had a gret opinioún,
That if I mighte skape fro prisoún,
Then had I been in joye and perfyt health,
And now I am exilèd fro my wealth.
Since that I may not see you, Emelye,
I am but deed; ther is no remedye."
Uppon that other syde Palomon,
When that he wiste that Arcite had gone,
Such sorrow maketh, that the grete tour
Resowneth of his yellyng and clamoúr.
The very feteres of his legges grete
Were of his bitter salte teres wete.
"Allas!" quoth he, "Arcita, cosyn myn,
Of al oure strif, God wot, the fruyt is thin.
Thow walkest now in Thebes at thi large,
And of my woe thou makest litel charge.
Thou maiste, since thou hast wysdom and manhede,
Assemble al the folk of oure kyndred,
And make a werre so sharpe in this citee,
That by som áventure, or by som trety,
Thou mayst her wynne to lady and to wyf,
For whom that I must needes lose my lyf.
For as by wey of possibilitee,
Since thou art at thi large of prisoun free,
And art a lord, gret is thy ávantage,
More than is myn, that sterve here in a cage.
For I must weepe and weyle, whil that I lyve,
With al the woe that prisoun may me give,
And eek with peyne that love me giveth also,
That doubleth al my torment and my woe."
Therwith the fire of jelousye upsterte
Withinne his brest, and caught him by the herte
So madly, that he like was to byholde
The box-tree, or the asshen deed and colde.
Then seyde; "O goddes cruel, that govérne
This world with byndyng of your word eterne,
And writen in the table of adamant
Is all your will and youre eterne graunte,
How is mankynde more by you held
Than is the sheep, that lieth in the field?
For slayn is man right as another beste,

And dwelleth eek in prisoun and arreste,
And hath seknesse, and greet adversitee,
And ofte tymes gilteles, pardé.
What governaunce is in youre prescience,
That gilteles tormenteth innocence?
And yet encreaseth this al my penaúnce,
That man is bounden to this óbservaúnce
For Goddes sake to conquer al his wille,
When every beste may al his lust fulfille.
And whan a beste is deed, he hath no peyne;
But man after his deth must wepe and pleyne,
Though in this world he have care and woe.
Withouten doute he shall have peynes mo.
The answer of this I leve to divinis,
But wel I wot, that in this world gret pyne is.
Allas! I see a serpent or a theef,
That unto many a man hath done mescheef,
Go at his large, and where him lust may turne.
But I muste be in prisoun through Saturne,
And eek through Juno, jealous and eke wood,
That hath destroyèd wel nigh al the blood
Of Thebes, with his waste walles wyde.
And Venus sleeth me on that other syde
For jelousye, and fere of him—Arcyte."
Now wol I stynte of Palamon a lite,
And lete him in his prisoun stille dwelle,
And of Arcita forth then wil I telle.
The somer passeth, and the nightes longe
Encreasen double wise the peynes stronge
Bothe of the lover and the prisoner.
I know not which one is the wofuller.
For shortly for to sey, this Palomon
Perpetuelly is damnèd in prisoún,
In cheynes and in feteres to be deed;
And Arcite is exiled upon his hed
For evere mo as out of that contree,
And nevere mo shal he his lady see.
Now loveres axe I you this question,
Who hath the worse, Arcite or Palomon?
That one may see his lady day by day,
But in prisoun he muste dwelle alway.
That other where him luste may ryde or go,
But see his lady shal he never mo.

Now deem it as you liste, ye that can,
For I wil telle forth as I bigan.
When that Arcite to Thebes come was,
Ful oft a day he moaned and seyd alas!
For see his lady shal he never mo.
And shortly to concluden al his woe,
So moche sorrow had never créatúre,
That is or shal be while the world may dure.
His sleep, his mete, his drynk is him byraft,
That lene he waxeth, and drye as eny shaft.
His eyen hollow, grisly to biholde;
His hewe yellow, and pale as asshen colde,
And solitary he was, and ever alone,
And dwellying al the night, making his mone.
And if he herde song or instrument,
Then wolde he wepe, he might not be silent;
So feble were his spirits, and so lowe,
And chaungèd so, that no man coulde knowe
His speche nor his vois, though men it herde.
And in his look, for al the world he fared
Naught only lyke the lovers heaviness
Of Cupido, but rather lik madnesse,
Engendred of humoúr melancolýk,
In his forehead and braine fántastic.
And shortly turnèd was all up-so-doun
Bothe habit and eek disposicioun
Of him, this woful lovere Dan Arcite.
What shulde I alway of his woe endite?
When he endurèd had a yeer or tuo
This cruel torment, and this peyne and woe,
At Thebes, in his contree, as I seyde,
Upon a night in sleep as he him leyde,
Him thought that how the winged god Mercurie
Byforn him stood, and bad him to be merry.
His slepy staff in hond he bar upright;
An hat he wered upon his heres bright.
Arrayèd was this god (as he took keepe)
As he was when he Argus laid to sleep;
And seyde thus: "To Athenes shalt thou wende;
There is y-shapen of thy woe an ende."
And with that word Arcite woke and sterte.
"Now tremely how sore that me smerte."
Quoth he, "to Athenes right now wil I fare;

And for the drede of deth shal I not spare
To see my lady, that I love utterlie;
In her presénce I reck not if I die."
And with that word he caught a gret myrour,
And saw that chaungèd was al his coloúr,
And saw his visage was in another kynde.
And right anon it ran him into mynde,
That since his face was so dísfigúred
Of maladie the which he had endured,
He mighte wel, if that he kept him lowe,
Lyve in Athénes ever more unknowe,
And see his lady wel nigh day by day.
And right anon he chaungèd his aray,
And clothèd him as a pore laborer.
And al alone, save only one squyer,
That knew his counsel well and al his case,
Which was disgysèd poorely as he was,
To Athenes is he gone the nexte way.
And to the court he went upon a day,
And at the gate he profred his servýse,
To dragge and drawe, what-so men wolde devyse.
And shortly on this matter for to seyn,
He fel in office with a chamberleyn,
The which that dwellyng was with Emelye.
For he was wys, and coulde sone aspye
Of every servaunt, which that servèd there.
Wel coulde he hewe woode, and water bere,
For he was yonge and mighty for the nonce,
And also he was long and bygge of bones
To do what eny wight can him devyse.
A yeer or two he was in this servise,
Page of the chambre of Emelye the bright;
And Philostrate he told men that he hight.
But half so wel byloved a man as he
There never was in court of his degree.
He was so gentil of his condicioún,
That throughout al the court was his renoun.
They seyde that it were a charitee
That Theseus would advancen his degree
And putten him in honourable servýse,
Ther where he might his vertu exercise.
And thus withinne a while his name spronge
Bothe of his dedes, and his goode tonge,

That Theseus hath taken him so neer
That of his chambre he made him be squyer,
And gaf him gold to mayntene his degree;
And eek men brought him out of his countree
Fro yeer to yeer ful pryvyly his rente;
But honestly and slyly he it spente,
That no man wondred how that he it hadde.
And thre yeer in this wise his lyf he ladde,
And bare him so in pees and eek in warre,
Ther was no man that Theseus loveth more.
And in this blisse let I now Arcite,
And speke I wile of Palomon a lyte.
In derknes orrible and strong prisoún
This seven yeer hath lìvèd Palomon,
All pinèd. what for woe and for distresse.
Who feleth double sorrow and hevynesse
But Palamon? that love constreyneth so,
That quite out of his witt he goth for woe;
And eek therto he is a prisoner
Perpetuelly, nat only for a yeer.
Who coude ryme in Englissh properly
His martirdom? for-sothe it am not I;
Therefore I passe as lightly as I may.
It fel that in the seventhe yeer in May
The thridde night, (as olde bookes seyn,
That al this storie tellen more pleyn)
Were it by áventure or destinee,
(As, when a thing is shapen, it shal be,)
That soone after the mydnyght, Palamoun
By helpyng of a freend brak his prisoún,
And fleeth the citee fast as he may go,
For he had given drinke his gayler so
Of a spicerie and of a certeyn wyn,
With narcotykes and opie of Thebes fyn,
That al that night though that men wolde him shake,
The gayler sleep, he mighte nought awake.
And thus he fleeth as fast as ever he may.
The night was short, and sone cam the day,
That at all needs he most himselven hyde,
And to a grove faste ther besyde
With fearful foot then stalketh Palomoun.
For shortly this was his opynyoun,

That in that grove he wolde him hyde al day,
And in the night then wolde he take his way
To Thebes-ward, and pray his frendes alle
On Theseus to helpe him to battaile.
And shortely, or he wolde lose his lyf,
Of wynnen Emelye unto his wyf.
This is theffect of his intente playn.
Now wil I torne unto Arcite agayn,
That litel wiste how near him was his care,
Til that fortúne hath brought him in the snare.
The busy larke, messager of day,
Saluteth in her song the morning gray;
And fyry Phebus ryseth up so bright,
That al the orient laugheth with the light,
And with his stremes dryeth in the greves
The silver dropes, hongyng on the leeves.
And Arcite, that is in the cours royál
With Theseus, his squyer principal,
Is risen, and loketh on the mery day,
And for to do his óbservance to May
Remembryng all the poynt of his desire,
He on his courser, proud as is the fire,
Is riden to the feeldes him to pleye,
Out of the court, were it a myle or tweye.
And to the grove, of which that I you tolde,
By áventure his wey he gan to holde,
To maken him a garland for the morn,
Were it of woodbyn or of hawe-thorn,
And lowde he song against the sonne sheene:
"May, with al thy floures and thy greene,
Welcome be thou, thou faire fresshe May!
I hope that I som grene gete may."
And fro his courser, with a lusty herte,
Into the grove ful lustily he sterte,
And in a pathe he romèd up and doun,
Whereas by áventure this Palamoun
Was in a bushe, that no man might him see.
Ful sore aferèd of his deth was he,
And nothing knew he that it was Arcite:
God wot he wolde have trowèd it ful lite.
For soth it hath been seyd ful many yeres,
That feeldes have eyen, and the woode hath eeres.

It is ful wise to bear an evene minde,
At everich hour the foe his foe may finde.
Ful litel wot Arcite of his feláwe,
That was so nigh to herken all his sawe,
For in the busche he sitteth now ful stille.
Whan that Arcite had romèd at his fille,
And songen al the roundel lustily,
Into a studie he fel sodeynly,
As do these lovers in there queynt manére,
Now in the toppe, now lying in the mire,
Now up, now doun, as boket in a welle.
Right as the Friday, sothly for to telle,
Now it shyneth, and now reyneth faste,
Right so gan fickel Venus overcaste
The hertes of her folk, right as her day
Is fickel, right so chaungeth her aray.
Seldom is Friday like each other day.
Whan that Arcite hadde songe, he gan to stay,
And sette him doun withouten eny more:
"Alas!" quoth he, "that day that I was bore!
How longe Juno, thurgh thy crueltee
Wilt thou destroyen Thebes the citee?
Allas! i-brought is to confusioún
The blood royál of Cadme and Amphioun:
Of Cadmus, which that was the firste man
That Thebes built, or first the toun bygan,
And of that citee first was crownèd kyng,
Of his lynáge am I, and his ofspring
By verray lyne, and of his stock royál:
And now I am so caytyf and so thral,
That he that is my mortal enemy,
I serve him as his squyer poorely.
And yet doth Juno me far more shame,
For I dare nought byknowe myn owne name,
But ther as I was wont to be Arcite,
Now am I Philostrate, nought worth a myte.
Allas! thou felle Mars, alas! Juno,
Thus hath youre ire owre lynage all fordo,
Save only me, and wretched Palomon,
That Theseus hath martyred in prisoún.
And over al this, to slay me utterly,
Love hath his fyry dart so brennyngly
I-sticked thrugh my trewe careful herte,

That shapen was my deth before my shirte.
Ye slay me with youre eyen, Emelye;
Ye be the cause wherfore that I dye.
Of al the remenant of al myn other care
Ne sette I nought the value of a tare,
So that I coude do ought to youre pleasaúnce."
And with that word he fel doun in a traunce
A longe tyme; and aftirward upsterte
This Palamon, that thoughte thurgh his herte
He felt a cold sword suddenly to glyde:
For ire he quaked, he wolde no longer abyde,
And when that he hath herd Arcites tale,
As he were mad, with face deed and pale,
He sterte him up out of the busshes thikke,
And seyd: "Arcyte, false traitour wikke,
Now art thou caught, that lovest my lady so,
For whom that I have al this peyne and woe,
And art my blood, and to my counseil sworn,
As I ful ofte have told thee here byforn,
And has deceivèd here duk Theseus,
And falsly chaungèd hast thy name thus;
I wil be deed, or else thou shalt dye.
Thou shalt not love my lady Emelye,
But I wil love hire only and no mo;
For I am Palomon thy mortal fo.
And though that I no wepen have in this place,
But out of prisoun am y-stert by grace,
I drede not that either thou shalt dye,
Or that thou never shalt love Emelye.
Choose which thou wilt, for thou shalt not
departe."
This Arcita, with ful despiteous herte,
Whan he him knew, and had his tale herde,
As fierce as lyoun pulleth out a swerde,
And seide thus: "By God that sitteth above,
Were it not thou art sike and mad for love,
And eek that thou no wepne hast in this place,
Thou sholdest never out of this grove pace.
Thou shuldest deyen of myn owen hond.
For I defye the suretee and the bond
Which that thou seyst that I have maad to thee.
For, very fool, know well that love is free.
And I will love hire yet for al thy might.

But, for thou art a gentil perfight knight,
And woldest fighten for her by batayle,
Have heere my trothe, to morrow I wil not fayle,
Withouten wittyng of eny other wight,
That heer I wil be founden as a knight,
And bryngen harneys right inough for thee;
And choose the best, and leave the worst for me.
And mete and drynke this night wil I bryng
Inough for thee, and cloth for thy beddynge.
And if so be that thou my lady wynne,
And sle me in this wood that I am inne,
Thou maist wel have thy lady as for me."
This Palomon answereth, " I graunt it thee."
And thus they be depart til morning light,
Whan ech of them had pledged his feith to fight.
O Cupide, foe of alle charitee!
O King, that wolt no felaw have with thee,
Ful soth is seyde, that love and eek lordshipe
Wol not, for aught, have any fellowship.
Wel fynden that Arcite and Palamoun.
Arcite is ridden anon unto the toun,
And on the morrow, ere it were day light,
Ful prively two armours hath he dight,
Bothe suffisaunt and mete for to do
The batayl in the feeld betwix them two.
And on his hors, alone as he was borne,
He caryed al this armour him biforn;
And in the grove, at tyme and place i-sette,
This Arcite and this Palamon be mette.
Then changen gan their colour in their face.
Right as the hunter in the land of Trace
That stondeth in the gappe with a spere,
When honted is the lyoun or the bere,
And hereth him come rushing in the greves,
And breking both the bowes and the leves,
And thenketh, " Here cometh my mortel enemy,
Withoute faile, he must be deed or;
For eyther I must slay him at the gappe,
Or he must slee me, if it me myshappe: "
So ferden they, in changyng of their hew,
As fer as eyther of them other knew.
Ther was no good day, ne no salutyng;
But streyt withouten word or rehersyng,

Eche one of them helpeth to arm the other,
As friendly as he were his owen brother;
And thenne with their sharpe speres stronge
They thrusten eche at other wonder longe.
And then it semede that this Palomon
In his fightyng were as a mad lyoun,
And as a cruel tygre was Arcite:
As wilde boores they began to smyte,
That frothen white as fome, in anger wood.
Up to the ancle they fought in there blood.
And in this wise I lete them fightyng welle;
And forthere wil I of duk Theseus telle.

The destinee mynistre general,
That executeth truly over all
The events, that God hath seen and seide byforn;
So strong it is, that though the world had sworn
The contrary of a thing by yea or nay,
Yet som tyme it shal falle upon a day
What falleth nought within a thousand yeere.
For certeynly oure appetites here,
Be it of war, or peace, or hate, or love,
Al is it rulèd by the sight above.
This mene I now by mighty Theseus,
That for to hunten is so désirous,
And namely the grete hert in May,
That in his bed ther dawneth him no day,
He is not clad, and redy for to ryde
With hunt and horn, and houndes him byside.
For in his huntyng hath he such delyt,
That it is al his joye and appetyt
To be himself the grete hertes bane,
For after Mars he serveth now Dyane.

Cleer was the day, as I have told ere this,
And Theseus, with alle joye and bliss,
With his Hippolyta, the fayre queene,
And Emelye, clothèd al in greene,
On huntyng be thay riden royally.
And to the grove, that stood ther faste by,
In which ther was an hert as men him tolde,
Duk Theseus the streyte wey hath holde.
And to the place he rydeth him ful right,
Where was the hert y-wont to have his flight,
And over a brook, and so forth in his weye.

This duk wil have of him a cours of tweye
With houndes, such as he can best comaunde.
And whan this duk was come into the ground,
Under the sonne he loketh, and right anon
Was war of Arcite and of Palomon,
That foughten fierce, as it were bores tuo;
The brighte swerdes wente to and fro
So hideously, that with the leste strook
It seemeth as it wolde felle an oak;
But what they were, nothing did he ween.
This duk his hors smot with his spores sheen,
And at a stert he was betwixt them tuo,
And pulled out a swerd and crièd, "Hoo!
Nomore, on peyne of losyng of your hed.
By mighty Mars, anon he shal be ded,
That smyteth eny strook, that I may see!
But telle me what maner men ye be,
That be so hardy for to fighten here
Withoute judge or other officere,
As it were in a lyste royally?"
This Palamon answerde hastily,
And seyde: "Sir, what nedeth wordes mo?
We have the deth deservèd bothe tuo.
Tue woful wretches be we, and caytyves,
That be encombred of oure owne lyves;
And as thou art a rightful lord and judge,
Give neither eny morcy nor refúge.
And sle me first, for seynte charitee;
But sle my felaw eek as wel as me.
Or sle him first; for, look that thou know him
right,
This is thy mortal fo, this is Arcite,
That fro thy lond by thee is banishèd,
For which he hath deservèd to be ded.
For this is he that came to thi gate
And seyd, that he was clepèd Philostrate.
Thus hath he cheated thee ful many a yer,
And thou hast made of him thy cheef squyer.
And this is he that loveth Emelye.
For since the day is come that I shal dye,
I make pleynly my confessioun,
That I am he, the woful Palamoun,
That hath thi prisoun broke wikkedly.

I am thy mortal fo, and it am I
That loveth so hot Emely the bright,
That I wil dy*e* present in his sight.
Therefore I ask*e* deeth and my justice;
But slee my felaw in the sam*e* wyse,
For bothe we have deservèd to be slayn."
This worthy duk answered anon agayn,
And seide: "This is a short conclusioún:
Your owne mouth, by your owne confessioún,
Hath damned you bothe, and I wil it recorde.
It needeth nought to hang yow with the corde.
Ye shal be deed by mighty Mars the red!"
The queen anon for very wommonhede
Gan for to wepe, and so ded Emelye,
And alle the ladies in the companye.
Great pity was it, as it thought them alle,
That evere such a chaunc*e* shuld*e* falle;
For gentil men they were and of gret estate,
And nothing but for love was this debate.
And saw their bloody woundes wyde and sore;
And alle they cryden bothe less and more.
"Have mercy, Lord, upon us wommen alle!"
And on there bar*e* knees anon they falle,
And wolde have kissed his feet right as he stood,
Til at the laste aslakèd was his mood;
For pite runneth sone in gentil herte.
And though he first for ir*e* quaked and sterte
He hath it al considered in a clause,
The trespas of them bothe, and eek the cause:
And although that his ire there gylt accused,
Yet he, in his resoún, them bothe excused;
And thus he thought that every maner man
Wil help himself in love if that he can,
And eek delyver himself out of prisoún.
And in his hert he had compassioún
Of wommen, for they wepen ever as one;
And in his gentil hert he thought anon,
And sothly he to himself he seyd*e*: "Fy
Upon a lord that wil have no mercy,
But be a lyoun bothe in word and dede,
To them that be in répentaúnce and drede,
As wel as to a proud dispiteous man,
That wol maynteyn*e* what he first bigan.

That lord hath litel of discrecioun,
That in such case knows no divisioun;
But wayeth pride and humblenesse as one,
And shortly, whan his ire is over-gon,
He gan to loke on them with lighter eye,
And spak these same wordes in charity.
" The god of love, a! *benedicite*,
How mighty and how gret a lord is he!
Agaynst his might there standeth no obstácles,
He may be cleped a god for his mirácles;
For he can maken at his owen gyse
Of every herte, al that he wil devyse.
Lo here is Arcite and here Palomon,
That freely weren out of my prisoún,
And might have lyved in Thebes royally,
And know I am their mortal enemy,
And that there deth lieth in my might also,
And yet hath love, for al their eyen tuo,
I-brought them hider bothe for to dye.
Now look ye, is nat that an high folye?
Who may not be a foole, if that he love?
Byholde for Goddes sake that sitteth above,
See how they blede. Be they nought wel arrayed?
Thus hath their lord, the god of love, them payed
Their wages and their fees fro their servise.
And yet they wenen for to be ful wise,
That serven love, for ought that may bifalle.
But this is yet the beste of alle,
That she, for whom they have this jelousye,
Can them therfore as moche thank as me.
She wot no more of al this hote fare,
By God, than wot a cuckow or an hare.
But al must be assayèd hot or colde;
A man must be a fool or yong or olde;
I wot it by myself ful yore agon:
For in my tyme a lover was I one.
And since that I knewe well of loves peyne,
And wot how sore it can a man destreyne,
As he that hath ben oft caught in his trap,
I you forgeve wholly this myshappe,
At the réquest of the queen that kneleth here,
And eek of Emely, my sister deere.
And ye shal bothe anon unto me swere,

That never ye shal harm my contree deere,
Nor make werre on me by night or day,
But be my freendes in alle that ye may.
I you forgeve this trespas every whit."
And they him swore his axyng faire and fit,
And him for lordship and for mercy prayde,
And he them graunted mercy, and thus he sayde:
"To speke of royal lynage and richés
Though that she were a queen or a pryncess,
Ech of yow both is worthy douteless
To wedde when tyme is, but nontheles
I speke as for my sister Emelye,
For whom ye have this stryf and jelousye,
Ye wot youreself she may not wedde two
At once, although ye faughten ever mo:
That one of yow, whether he be loth or lief,
He may go play uppon an ivy leef;
This is to say, she may nought have bothe,
Al be ye never so jelous, or so lothe.
Therefore I put you bothe in this degree,
That ech of you shal have his destynee,
As him is shape, and herken in what wyse;
Lo here the ende of that I shal devyse.
My wil is this, for playn conclusioun,
Withouten eny repplicacioun,
If that you liketh, tak it for the best,
That ech of you shall go wherever he list
Frely withouten raunsoun or dangér;
And this day fyfty weekes, fer or near,
Ech of you then shal bryng an hundred knightes,
Armèd for lystes here in all our sightes
Al redy to contest her by batayle.
And thus commaunde I you withouten fayle
Upon my trothe, and as I am a knight,
That which of yow two bothe that hath might,
This is to sey, that whethir he or thou
May with his hundred, as I spak of now,
Slay his contráry, or out of lystes dryve,
Him shal I geve faire Emelye to wyve
To whom that fortune geveth so fair a grace,
The lyste shal I make here in this place,
And God so wisly on my sowle have ruth,
As I shal even judge be in truth.

Ye shul no othir ende with me make,
That one of yow shal either be ded or take.
And if you thinketh this is wel i-sayde,
Say youre say, and hold yow wel apayde.
This is youre ende and youre conclusioun."
Who loketh lightly now but Palomoun?
Who spryngeth up for joye but Arcite?
Who coude telle, or who coude wel endite,
The joye that is made in al this place
Whan Theseus hath don so fair a grace?
But down on knees wente every maner wight,
And thankèd him with al their hertes miht,
And namely these two Thebans of his grace.
And thus with good hope and with mery face
They take their leve, and hom-ward bothe they ryde
To Thebes-ward, with olde walles wyde.
I trowe men wold deme it necligence,
If I forgete to telle the dispence
Of Theseus, that goth so busily
To maken up the lystes royally.
And such a noble theatre to see,
I dar say in this world shal never be.
The circuite of it was a myle aboute,
Wallèd of stoon, and dychèd al withoute.
Round was the shape, in maner of compass,
Ful of degrees, the height of sixty pace,
That when a man was set in one degree
He stayèd nought his felaw for to see.
Est-ward ther stood a gate of marbul whit,
West-ward another such in opposit.
And shortly to conclude, such a place
Was non in erthe within so litel space.
In al the lond ther was no craftesman
That géométry or arithmétic can,
Nor portreyour, nor kerver of ymáges,
That Theseus gave not his mete and wages
The theatre for to maken and devyse.
And for to do his right and sacrifise,
He est-ward hath upon the gate above,
In worship of Venus, goddess of love,
Don make an altar and an oratory;
And westward in the mynde and memory

Of Mars, he hath i-makèd a temple hy
That coste of gold and silver largely.
And northward, in a toret on the walle,
Of alabaster whit and red corálle
An oratory riche for to see,
To clene Dyane, goddess of chastitee,
Hath Theseus i-wrought in noble wise.
But yit had I forgeten to devyse
The nobil kervyng, and the portretures,
The shape, and countenaunce of the figúres,
That weren in these oratories three.

Furst in the temple of Venus thou may see
Wrought in the wal, ful piteous to byholde,
The broken slepes, and the sighes colde;
The sacred teeres, and the lámentyng;
The fyry strokes and the désiryng,
That loves servaunts in this lyf enduren;
The othes that their covenants assuren.
Plesánce and hope, desyr, fool-hardynesse,
Beautee and youthe, lecherie and richesse,
Charmes and sorcery, lesynges and flatery,
Dispense, busynes, and jelousy,
That wered of yelow goldes a gerland,
And a cukkowe sittyng on her hand;
Festes, and instruments, carols, and daunces,
Lust and array, and al the circumstaunces
Of love, which I rekned and reken shal,
Ech by the other were peynted on the wal.
And mo than I can make of mencioun.
For sothly al the mount of Citheroun,
Where Venus hath her principal dwellyng,
Was shewèd on the wal in portrayng
With alle the gardyn, and al the lustynes.
Nought was forgot; the porter Idelnesse,
And Narcisus the fayr of long agon,
And al the foly of kyng Salomon,
And al the grete strengthe of Hercules,
Thenchauntements of Medea and Cerces,
And of Turnús the hard fyry corage,
The riche Cresus caytif in servage.
Thus may we see, that wisdom and riches,
Beautee and sleighte, strengthe and hardynes,
May not with Venus holde comparisoún,

For as she liste she turneth up or doun.
Lo, al this folk i-caught were in her trace,
Til they for wo ful often sayde allas.
Sufficeth this ensample one or tuo,
Although I rekon coud a thousend mo.
The statu of Venus, glorious for to see,
Was naked flotyng in the large see,
And from the navel doun al covered was
With waves grene, and bright as eny glas.
In her right hand a harpe hadde she,
And on her hed, ful semely for to see,
A rose garland swete and wel smellyng,
Above her heed her doves were flickering.
Bifore hir stood hir sone Cupido,
Upon his shuldres were wynges two;
And blynd he was, as it is often seene;
A bowe he bare and arrows fair and keene.
Why shuld I not as wel telle you alle
The portraiture, that was upon the walle
Within the temple of Mars of mighty strength?
Al peynted was the wal in bredth and length
Like to the halles of the grisly place,
Y-callèd the gret temple of Mars in Thrace,
Within that colde and frosty regioún,
Where Mars hath built his sovereyn mansioún.
First on the wal was peynted a foréste,
In which ther dwellède neyther man nor beste,
With knotty knarry bareyn trees olde
With stubbes sharpe and hideous to beholde;
In which ther ran a rumble and a moan,
As though a storme shulde tear the branches down:
And downward wher the hil to the plaine is bent,
Ther stood the temple of Mars armypotent,
Wrought al of burnèd steel, of which the entry
Was long and streyt, and ghastly for to see.
And therout came a blast in suche wise,
That it made al the gates for to rise.
The northern light in at the dore shone,
For wyndow on the walle was ther none,
Through which men might the light of day discerne.
The dores wer alle adamant eterne,
Y-clenchèd overthwart and endelong

With iron tough; and, for to make it strong,
Every pillar the temple to sustaine
Was round and greet, of iron bright and sheene.
Ther saw I first the dark imagining
Of felony, and al the compassyng;
The cruel wrath, as eny furnace red;
The pickepurs, and eke the pale Dread;
The smyler with the knyf under his cloke:
The stables burnyng with the blake smoke;
The tresoun of the murtheryng in the bed;
The open warres, with woundes al y-bled;
Conflict with bloody knyf, and sharp menáce.
Al ful of shriekyng was that sory place.
The slayer of himself yet saw I ther,
His herte blood hath bathèd al his hair;
The nayl y-dryven in the skull at nyght;
The colde deth, with mouth gapyng upright.
In midst of al the temple sat meschaunce,
With sory comfort and evil countynaúnce.
Ther I saw madness laughyng in his rage;
Arméd complaint, alarm and fierce outráge.
The body in the bushe, with throte y-bled:
A thousand slayne, and none of sickness dead;
The tiraunt, with the prey bi force y-refte;
The toune distroyèd, there was no thing lefte.
Ther burnt the shippes daunsyng up and doun;
Ther dyed the hunter by the wilde lión:
The sowe eatyng the child right in the cradel;
The cook y-skalded, for al his longe ladel.
Nought was forgot the ill-fortüne of Mart;
The carter over-ridden by his cart,
Under the wheel ful lowe he lay adoun.
Ther wer also in Mars his regioún,
The barbour, and the butcher, and the smyth
That forgeth sharpe swordes on his stith.
And al above y-peynted in a tour
Saw I Conquest sittyng in grete honoúr,
The scharpe swerde hangyng over his hed
Y-fastened by a slender twines thread.
Y-peynted was the slaughter of Julius,
Of grete Nero, and of Antonius;
Al be that at that tyme they were unborn,
Yet was there deth y-peynted ther beforn,

By menacyng of Mars, each ones figúre,
So was it shewèd in the pourtretúre
As is y-peynted in the sterres above,
Who shal be slayn or who shal dye for love.
Sufficeth one example in stories olde,
I may not reken them alle, though I wolde.
The statue of Mars upon a carte stood,
Armèd, and lovèd grym and red as blood;
And over his hed ther shyneth two figüres
Of sterres, that be clepèd in scriptures,
The one Puella, that other Rubius.
This god of armes was arrayèd thus.
A wolf ther stood byforn him at his feet
With eyen red, and of a man he ate;
With subtil pencel peynted was this storie,
In honouring of Mars and of his glorie.
Now to the temple of Dyane the chaste
As shortly as I can I wil me haste,
To telle you al the descripcioún.
Depeynted be the walles up and doun,
Of huntyng and of shamefast chastitee.
Ther saw I how woful Calystopé,
When that Dyane was agreved with her,
Was turnèd from a womman to a bere,
And after was she made the lode-sterre;
Thus was it peynted, I can say no more;
Hir son is eek a star, as men may see.
Ther saw I Dyane turned intil a tree,
I mene nought the hy goddés Dyane,
But Peneus doughter, the whiche highte Dane.
Ther saw I Atheon an hert i-makèd,
For vengeance that he saw Dyane al naked;
I saw how that his houndes have him caught
And eten him, for that they knew him naught.
Yit peynted was a litel forthermore.
How Atthalaunce huntyd the wilde bore,
And Melyagre, and many another mo,
For which Dyane wrought them care and wo.
Ther saw I eek ful many another story,
The which me list not drawe in memory.
This goddess on an hert ful hy she sat,
With smale houndes al aboute hir feet,
And undernethe her feet she had the moone,

Wexyng it was, and shulde wane soone.
In gaude greene her statue clothèd was,
With bowe in hande, and arrows in a case.
Hir eyen caste she ful lowe adoun,
Where Pluto hath his derke regioún.
A womman travailyng was hir biforn,
But for her child so longe was unborn
Ful piteously Lucyna gan she calle,
And seyde, " Help, for thou mayst best of alle."
Wel coude he peynten lyf-like that it wrought,
With many a floren he the hewes bought.
Now be these listes made, and Theseus
That at his grete cost arayèd thus
The temples and the theatres to see,
When it was don, it liked him wonderly.
But stynt I wil of Theseus a lite,
And speke of Palomon and of Arcite.
The day approcheth of their tourneying,
That eche shuld an hundred knightes brynge,
The batail to maintain, as I you tolde;
And to Athenes, their covenant to holde,
Hath eche of them brought out an hundred knightes
Wel armèd for the werre at alle rights.
And certeynly ther trowèd many a man
That never, since the day this world bigan,
To speke of knighthod or of high degree,
As fer as God hath makèd land or sea,
Came, from so fewe, so good a company.
For every wight that loveth chyvalry,
And wolde seek to have a noble name
Hath preyèd that he might be of that game;
Wel was to him, that therto chosen was.
For if ther felle to morrow such a case,
I knowe wel, that every lusty knight
That loveth his lady, and that hath his might,
Were it in Engelond, or elleswhere,
They wolde longen douteless to be there.
To fighte for a lady; bencité!
It were a lusty sighte for to see.
And right so journeyed they with Palomon.
With him ther wente knyghtes many a oon;
Some will be armèd in an armour stout,

In a brest-plat and in a lighte cote;
And som wold have a peyre of plates large;
And som wold have a Pruce shield, or targe;
Som wil be armèd on their legges weel,
And have an ax, and eek a mace of steel.
Ther is no newe gyse, that is not old.
Armèd were they, as I have now you told,
Eche at his pleasure and opinioun.
There mayst thou see comyng with Palomoun
Ligurge himself, the grete kyng of Thrace;
Blak was his berd, and manly was his face.
The circles of his eyen in his hed
They glowéden bytwixe yellow and red,
And lik a griffoun lokèd he aboute,
With shaggy heres on his browes stoute;
His lymes greet, his brawnes hard and stronge,
His shuldres brood, his armes rounde and longe.
And as the gyse was in his contree,
Ful heye upon a car of gold stood he,
With foure white bulls in the traces.
In stede of cote armoúr on his harness,
He had a bere skyn, cole-blak and old,
With nailes yelwe, and bright as eny gold.
His longe heer y-kempt byhynd his bak,
As eny raven fether it shone for blak.
A wrethe of gold arm-great, and huge of weight,
Upon his hed, set ful of stones bright,
Of fyne rubies and of dyamaunts.
Aboute his car ther wenten white hounds,
Twenty and mo, as grete as eny steer,
To hunten at the lyoun or the bere,
And followed him, with muzzle fast i-bounde,
Collared with golde, and ringes fylèd rounde.
An hundred lordes had he in his route
Armèd ful wel, with hertes stern and stoute.
With Arcite, as in stories ye shal finde,
The gret Emetreus, the kyng of Ynde,
Uppon a steede bay, trappèd in steel,
Covered with cloth of gold dyápred wel,
Cam rydyng lyk the god of armes, Mars.
His cote armour was of a cloth of Tars,
Broided with perles whyte, round and grete.
His sadil was of burnt gold newe y-bete;

A mantelet upon his shuldre hangyng
Brim-ful of rubies red, as fire sparklyng.
His crispe hair all into ringes dight,
And that was yelwe, and gliteryng as the light.
His nose was high, his eyen bright and keen,
His lippes rounde, his colour was sangwyn,
A fewe frekles in his face y-sprinkled,
Betwixe yelwe and blak somewhat y-mingled
And as a lyoun he his lokyng caste.
Of fyve and twenty yeer his age I caste.
His berd was wel bygonne for to sprynge;
His voys was as a trumpe thunderynge.
Upon his hed he werèd laurel grene
A garlond fresch and lusty for to sene.
Upon his hond he bar for his delyt
An egle tame, as eny lylie whyt.
An hundred lordes had he with him ther,
Al armèd save their hedes in their gear,
Ful richely in alle maner thinges.
For truste wel, that dukes, erles, kynges,
Were gadred in this noble companye,
For love, and for encrease of chivalrye.
Aboute the kyng ther ran on every part
Ful many a tame lyoun and lepard.
And in this wise these lordes alle and some
Be on the Sonday to the citee come
Aboute prime, and in the toun alight.
This Theseus, this duk, this worthy knight,
Whan he had brought them into this citee,
And innèd them, eche one at his degree
He festeth them, and doth so gret laboúr
To lodge them, and do them al honoúr,
That yit men thinketh that no mannes wyt
Of non estat coude aught amenden it.
The mynstralcye, the servyce at the feste,
The grete giftes to the most and leste,
The riche aray of Theseus palace,
And who sat first and last upon the dais,
What ladies fayrest be or best daunsyng,
Or which of them can harpen best or syng,
And who most felyngly speketh of love;
What haukes sitten on the perche above,
What houndes lyen in the floor adoun,

Of al this make I now no mencioun;
But of theffect; that thinketh me the beste;
Now comth the poynt, and herken if you leste.
The Sonday night, ere day bigan to springe,
When Palomon the larke herde synge,
Although it were nought day by houres tuo,
Yit sang the larke, and Palomon also
With holy herte, and with an high corâge
He rose, to wenden on his pilgrymage
Unto the blisful Cithera benigne,
I mene Venus, honorable and digne.
And in her hour he walketh forth a pace
Unto the lystes, where hir temple was,
And doun he kneleth, and, with humble cheer
And herte sore, he seide as ye shal heer.
" Fairest of faire, o lady myn Venús,
Doughter of Jove, and spouse to Vulcanus,
Thou gladder of the mount of Citheroun,
For that great love thou haddest to Adon
Have pitee on my bitter teeres smerte,
And tak myn humble prayer to thin herte.
Allas! I have no langage for to telle
Theffectes or the torments of myn helle;
Myn herte may myn harmes not betray;
I am so confus, that I may not seye.
But mercy, lady bright, that knowest wel
My thought, and felest what harm that I feel,
Consider al this, have ruth upon my sore,
And wisely shal I now for evermore
With all my might thi trewe servant be,
And holde werre alday with chastitee;
That make I myn avow, so ye me helpe.
I care not of armes for to yelpe,
Nor do I aske to morn to have victorie,
Or rénoun in this case, or veyne glorie
Of pris of armes, blowyng up and doun,
But I wolde have the ful possessioun
Of Emelye, and dye in thi servise;
Fynd thou the maner how, and in what wyse.
I recche nat, if it may better be,
To have victorie of him, or he of me,
So that I have my lady in myn armes.
For though so be that Mars be god of armes,

And ye be Venus, the goddéss of love,
Youre vertu is so gret in heven above,
Thy temple wil I worshipe evermo,
And on thin altar, whether I ryde or go,
I wil do sacrifice, and fyres light.
And if ye wil nat so, my lady bright,
Then pray I thee tomorrow with a darte
That fiers Arcite may pierce me to the herte.
Thenne rekke I not, when I have lost my lyf,
Though that Arcita have hir to his wyf.
This is theffect and ende of my prayére;
Gif me my love, thou blisful lady deere."
Whan the orisoun was don of Palomon,
His sacrifice he dede, and that anon
Ful piteously, with alle circumstances,
Though telle I nat as now his óbservánces.
But at the last the statu of Venus shook,
And made a signe, wherby that he took
That his prayér accepted was that day.
For though the signe shewèd a delay,
Yet wist he wel that graunted was his boone;
And with glad herte he went him hom ful soone.
The third hour inequál that Palomon
Bigan to Venus temple for to goon,
Up rose the sonne, and up rose Emelye,
And to the temple of Dian gan she hye.
Hir maydens, that she with hir thider ladde,
Ful redily with them the fyr they hadde,
The incense, the clothes, and the remnant al
That to the sacrifice longen shal;
The hornes ful of mead, as is the gyse;
Ther lakketh nought to do their sacrifise.
Smokyng the temple, ful of clothes faire.
This Emelye with herte debonaire
Hir body wessh with watir of a welle;
But how she dide her rite I dare nat telle,
Save it be eny thing in general;
And yet it were a game to here it al;
To him that meneth wel it were no wrong:
But it is good a man sholde kepe his tong.
Hir brighte hair was kempt, untressèd al;
A corone of a grene oak cerial
Upon hir heed was set ful fair and bright.

Tuo fyres on the alter gan she light,
And did al thinges, as men may biholde
In Stace of Thebes and the bokes olde.
Whan kyndled was the fyr, with piteous cheere
Unto Dyan she spak, as ye may heere.

"O chaste goddes of the woodes greene,
By whom bothe heven and erthe and see is seene,
Queen of the regne of Pluto derk and lowe,
Goddes of maydenes, that myn hert has knowe
Ful many a yeer, ye wot what I desire,
So keep me fro the vengeance and the ire,
That Atheon did suffer trewely:
O chaste goddesse, wel knowest thou that I
Desire to be a mayden al my lyf,
Nor never wil I be no love nor wyf.
I am yit, thou knowest, of thi company,
A mayden, and love huntyng and venery,
And for to walken in the woodes wylde,
And nought to be a wyf, and be with chylde.
Nought wil I knowe the company of man.
Now helpe me, lady, since ye may and kan,
For the three formes that thou hast in the.
And Palomon, that hath such love to me,
And eek Arcite, that loveth me so sore,
This grace I praye thee withouten more,
And sende love and pees betwix them two;
And fro me torne awey their hertes so,
That al their hote love, and their desire,
And al their torment, and their busy fyre
Be quensht, or turnèd in another place.
And if so be thou wolt do me no grace,
Or if my destynee be shapid so,
That I shal needes have one of them two,
So send me him that most desireth me.
Biholde, goddes of clene chastitee,
The bitter teeres that on my cheekes falle.
Since thou art mayde, and keper of us alle,
My maydenhode thou kepe and wel conserve,
And whil I lyve a mayde I wil thee serve."

The fyres burn upon the alter cleer,
Whil Emelye was thus in hir preyér;
But sodeinly she saw a sighte queynt,
For right anon one of the fyres did faint,

And glowed agayn, and after that anon
That other fyr was quensht, and al agon;
And as it quensht, it made a whistelyng,
As doth a wete brand in his burning.
And at the brandes end out ran anon
As it were bloody dropes many a one;
For which so sore agast was Emelye,
That she wel nigh mad was, and gan to crie,
For she ne wiste what it signifyed;
But all alone for feere thus she cryed,
And wepte, that it was pitee to heere.
And therewithal Dyane gan appeere,
With bow in hond, right as a hunteresse,
And seyd; "A! doughter, stynt thyn hevynesse.
Among the goddes hye it is affermed,
And by eterne word writ and confermed,
Thou shalt be wedded unto one of those,
That have for the so many cares and woes;
But unto which of them may I nat telle.
Farwel, for I may here no lenger dwelle.
The fyres which that on myn alter burn
Shal thee declare, ere that thou homward turn,
Thyn áventure of love, and in this place."
And with that word, the arrows in the case
Of the goddesse clatren faste and rynge,
And forth she went, and made a vanysshynge,
For which this Emelye astoneyd was,
And seide, "What amounteth this, allas!
I put me under thy protecciouún,
Dyane, and in thi disposicioun."
And hom she goth anon the nexte way.
This is theffect, ther is no more to say.
The houre nexte of Mars that folowed this,
Arcite unto the temple walkyd is,
To fyry Mars to do his sacrifise,
With al the rightes of his pagan wise.
With piteous herte and hy devocioún,
Right thus to Mars he sayd his orisoún:
"O stronge god, that in the countree colde
Of Trace honoúred and lord art thou y-hold,
And hast in every realm and every land
Of armes al the bridel in thy hand,
And guidest al as thou dost wel devyse,

Accept of me my piteous sacrifise.
If so be that my youthe may deserve,
And that my might be worthi for to serve
Thy godhed, that I may be one of thine,
Then pray I thee have pity on my pyne,
For that same peyne, and for that hote fyr,
In which whilom thou burnedst for desyre,
Whan that thou didst obtaine the gret beautee
Of faire Venus, that is so fressh and free,
And haddest hir in armes at thy wille;
Though on a tyme mischeef thee bifel,
When Vulcan caught thee in his nette wide,
And fand thee liggyng by his wyfes side
For that same sorwe that was in thin herte,
Have pity too upon my peynes smerte.
I am yong and unkonnyng, as thou knowst,
And, as I trowe, with love offendid most,
That ever was eny lyve créatúre;
For she, that doth me al this wo endure,
Ne rekketh never whether I synke or live.
And wel I wot, ere she me mercy give,
I must with strengthe wyn hir in the place;
And wel I wot, withouten help or grace
Of thee, my strengthe may nought a whit avayle.
Then help me, lord, tomorrow in my batayle,
For that same fyr that whilom burnèd the,
Right so this fyre now it burneth me:
Make now tomorrow I have the victorie.
Myn be the travail, al thin be the glorie.
Thy soverein tempul wol I most honoúren
Of any place, and alway most laboúren
In thy pleasure and in thy craftes stronge.
And in thy tempul I wil my baner hong,
And alle the armes of my companye,
And ever more, unto that day I dye,
Eterne fyr I wol bifore thee fynde.
And eek to this avow I wil me bynde:
My beard, myn heer that hangeth longe adoun,
That never yit has felt offensioún
Of rasour or of shere, I wil thee give,
And be thy trewe servaunt whiles I lyve.
Lord, have thou pity uppon my sorrows sore,
Gif me the victorie, I aske no more."

The preyer ended of Arcite the strang,
The rynges on the tempul dore that hang,
And eek the dores, clatereden ful fast,
Of which Arcita somwhat was agast.
The fires brenden on the alter bright,
That it gan al the tempul for to light;
A swete smel anon the ground did give,
Anon his hond Arcita did upheave,
And more encens into the fyr yet cast,
With othir rightes, and than atte last
The statu of Mars bigan his hauberk rynge,
And with that soun he herd a murmurynge
Ful lowe and dym, and sayde thus, "Victorie."
For which he gaf to Mars honoúr and glorie.
And thus with joye, and hope wel to win.
Arcite anon is gon unto his inne,
As fayn as bird is of the brighte sonne.
And right anon such stryf there is bygonne
For that same grauntyng, in the heven above,
Bitwixe Venus the goddés of love,
And Mars the sterne god armypotent,
That Jupiter was busy it to stent;
Til that the pale Saturnus the colde,
That knew so many áventures olde,
Found in his old experiens an art,
That he ful sone hath plesyd every part.
As soth is sayd, eld hath gret ávantage,
In eld is bothe wisdom and uságe;
Men may out-runne but not out-counselle age.
Saturne anon, to stynte stryf and rage,
Although to do thys be agaynst his mind,
Of al this stryf he can a remedy fynde.
"My deere doughter Venus," quoth Saturne,
"My cours, that hath so wyde for to turne,
Hath more power than wot eny man.
Myn is the drowning in the see so wan;
Myn is the prisoun in the derke ward;
Myn is the stranglyng and hangyng by the cord;
The murmur, and the cherles rébellyng;
The gronyng, and the privy enpoysonyng,
I make vengance and ful correctioun,
Whiles dwellyng in the signe of the lyoun.
Myn is the ruin of the hye halles,

The fallyng of the toures and the walles
Upon the mynour or the carpenter.
I slew Samson in shakyng the piler:
And myne be the maladies colde,
The derke tresoun, and the plottes olde;
Myn eye is the fadir of pestilens.
Now wepe nomore, I shal do my diligence,
That Palomon, that is myn own servaunt,
Shal have his lady, as thou didst him graunt.
Though Mars shal kepe his knight, yet nevertheles
Bitwixe you ther must som tyme be pees;
Al be ye nought of one complexioún,
That every day causeth divisioún.
I am thi fadirs fadir, at thy wille;
Wepe thou nomore, I wil thi lust fulfille."
Now wil I stinten of the goddes above,
Of Mars, and of Venús goddéss of love,
And telle you, as pleinly as I can,
The grete effecte for which that I bigan.
Gret was the fest in Athenes on that day,
And eek the lusty sesoun of that May
Made every wight to be in such plesaunce
That al the Monday jousten they and daunce,
And spenden it in Venus high servise.
But by the cause that they shal arise
Erly amorrow for to see that fight,
Unto their reste wente they at nyght,
And on the morrow whan the day gan spryng,
Of hors and harness noyse and clateryng
Ther was in al the hostelryes aboute;
And to the paleys rode ther many a route
Of lordes, upon steedes and palfréys.
Ther mayst thou see devysing of harness
So uncouth and so riche wrought and wel
Of goldsmithry, of broidery, and steel;
The sheldes bright, the helmets, and trappings;
Gold-beten helmes, hauberks, and cote armings;
Lordes in clothes riche on their coursers,
Knightes of retenu, and eek squyers
Nailing the speres, and helmes buckelyng,
Girdyng of sheeldes, with the thongs lacyng;
Where the need was, there they were nothing ydel

Ther fomen steedes, on the golden bridel
Gnawyng, and faste the armurers also
With fyle and hamer prikyng to and fro;
Yeomen on foot, and knaves many a one
With shorte staves, as thikke as they may goon;
Pypes, and trompes, drums, and clariounes,
That in the batail blewe bloody sownes;
The paleys ful of pepul up and doun,
Heer three, ther ten, holdyng there questioun,
Dyvynyng of these Thebans knightes two.
Som seyden thus, som seyd it shal be so;
Som held with him that hath the blake berd,
Som with the bald, som with the thikke haired;
Som sayd he lokèd grym and wolde fight;
He hath an ax of twenti pound of wight.
Thus was the halle ful of dévynyng,
Long after that the sonne gan to springe.
The gret Theseus that of his sleep is wakèd
With menstralcy and noyse that was makèd,
Kept yit the chambre of his paleys rare,
Til that the Thebanes knyghtes bothe were
Honoúrèd, and into the paleys go.
Duk Theseus was set at a wyndow,
Arayèd right as he were god on throne.
The pepul preseth thider-ward ful sone
Him for to see, and do him reverence,
And eek herken his hest and his sentence.
An herauld on a skaffold made a hoo,
Til al the noyse of the pepul was i-do;
And whan he saw the pepul of noyse al stille,
Thus shewèd he the mighty dukes wille.

"The lord hath of his hy discrecioun
Considered, that it were destruccioun
To gentil blood, to fighten in this wise
In mortal batail in this enterprise;
Wherfor to shapen that they shuld not dye,
He wil his firste purpos modifye.
No man therfore, on peyne of los of lyf,
No maner shot, nor pollax, nor schort knyf
Into the lystes sende, or thider brynge;
Nor schorte swerd to stick with poynt bytyng
No man shal drawe, or bere by his side.
And noman shal agayns his felawe ryde

But one cours, with a sharpe y-grounden spere;
If eny fall he shal on foote fight there.
And he that is the loser, shal be take,
And not slayn, but be brought unto the stake,
That shal be fixèd hy on eyther syde;
But thider he shal by force, and ther abyde.
And if so falle, a chieftayn shulde go
Unto the stake, or elles slay his fo,
No lenger shal the fight betwixe them laste.
God spede you; go forth and ley on faste.
With long swerd and with mace fight your fille.
Go now your way; this is the lordes wille."
The voices of the pepul touch the sky,
So lowde crièd thei with jollitee:
"God save such a lord that is so good,
He willeth no destruccioun of blood!"
Up go the trompes and the melodye.
And to the lystes ryde the companye
By ordynaunce, throughout the citee large,
Hangyng with cloth of gold, and not with serge.
Ful lik a lord this nobul duk can ryde,
And these two Theban knightes on eyther side;
And after rode the queen, and Emelye,
And after, of ladyes another companye,
And after, comunes al in there degree.
And thus they passéden thurgh that citee,
And to the lystes come thei by tyme.
It was not of the day yet fully pryme,
When sette was duk Theseus riche and hye,
Hippolyta the queen and Emelye,
And other ladyes in there degrees aboute.
Unto the seates presseth al the route;
And westeward, thorugh the gates of Mart,
Arcite, and eek the hundred of his part,
With baners red ys entred right anon;
And at that same moment Palomon
Is, under Venus, est-ward in that place,
With baner whyt, and hardy cheer and face.
In al the world, to seeken up and doun,
So even withoute doute or questión
Ther never were suche companyes tweye.
For ther was non so wys that coude seye,
That any had of the other ávantage

In worthines, or state or in viságe,
So evene were they chosen for to gesse.
And in two rankes faire they them dresse.
And when there names i-rad were everyone,
That in there nombre guile was ther non,
Then were the gates shut, and crièd lowde:
" Do now your devoir, yonge knightes proude! "
The heralds laft there prikyng up and doun;
Now ryngede out the tromp and clarioun;
Ther is nomore to say, but est and west
In go the speres ful surely in the rest;
Ther see men who can juste, and who can ryde;
In goth the sharpe spur into the side.
Ther shiver shaftes upon shuldres thyk;
He feeleth thurgh the navel the sharpe prik.
Up sprengen speres twenty foot on hight;
Out go the swerdes as the silver bright.
The helmes they to-hewen and to-shred;
Out brast the blood, with runnyng stremes red,
With mighty maces the bones thay to-burst.
He thurgh the thikkest of the throng gan thrust.
Ther stomble steedes strong, and doun gan falle.
He rolleth under foot as doth a balle.
He fighteth on his foot with a tronchoun,
And hurleth the other with his hors adoun.
He thurgh the body hurt is, and is take
Will he or no, and brought unto the stake,
As covenant was, right where he must abyde.
Another lad is on that other syde.
And Theseus doth make them al to reste,
Them to refressche, and drinke if so them list.
Ful oft a-day these knights, these Thebans two
Togider met, and wrought his felaw wo;
Unhorsèd hath ech other of them tweye.
Ther was no tygyr in the vale of Galgopleye,
Whan that her whelp is stole, whan it is lite,
So cruel on the hunt, as is Arcite
For jelous hert upon this Palomon:
Nor in Belmary ther is no fell lion,
That hunted is, or is for hunger wood,
Nor of his prey desireth so the blood,
As Palomon to slay his fo Arcite.
The jelous strokes on their helmes byte;

Out renneth blood on bothe their sides red.
Som tyme an ende ther is on every deed;
For ere the sonne unto his reste went,
The strange king Emetreus gan hent
This Palomon, as he faught with Arcite,
And deep into his flessh his swerd did byte;
And by the force of twenti he is take
Unyielded, and y-drawn unto the stake.
And in the rescue of this Palomon
The stronge kyng Ligurg is born adoun;
And kyng Emetreus for al his strengthe
Is borne out of his sadel his swerdes lengthe,
So hit him Palamon ere he were take;
But al for nought, he brought was to the stake.
His hardy herte might him helpe nought;
He most abyde when that he was caught,
By force, and eek by composicioun.
Who sorroweth now but woeful Palomoun,
That may nomore go agayn to fight?
And when that Theseus had seen that sight,
He cryèd, "Ho! nomore, for it is don!
And non shal longer unto his felaw goon.
I wol be trewe judge, and no partýe.
Arcyte of Thebes shal have Emelýe,
That hath her by his fortune now i-wonne."
Anon ther is a noyse of people begun
For joye of this, so loude and heye withalle,
It semèd that the very listes wolde falle.
What can now fayre Venus do above?
What seith she now? what doth this queen of love?
But wepeth so, for wantyng of her wille,
Til that her teeres in the lystes fill;
She seyde: "I am ashamèd douteless."
Saturnus seyd: "O Daughter, hold thy peace.
Mars hath his wille, his knight hath all his boon,
And by myn heed thou shalt be esèd soone."
The trompes with the lowde mynstralcy,
The heraldes, that ful lowde yelle and cry,
Been merry in there joye for Dan Arcyte.
But herk to me, and stay but yet a lite,
For there bifel a miracle anon.
This Arcyte fiercely hath put his helm adoun,

And on his courser for to shewe his face,
He prikèd up and down the large place,
Lokyng upward upon his Emelye;
And she agayn him cast a frendly eye,
(For wommen, for to speke as in comune,
Thay follow alle the favour of fortúne)
And was alle his in cheer, and in his herte.
Out of the ground a fyr infernal stert,
From Pluto sent, at réquest of Satúrne,
For which his hors for feere gan to turne,
And leep asyde, and foundred as he leep;
And ere that Arcyte may of this take keep,
He pight him on the pomel of his hed,
That in that place he lay as he were ded,
His brest to-broken with his sadil bowe.
As blak he lay as eny coal or crowe,
So was the blood y-ronnen in his face.
Anon he was y-born out of the place
With herte sore, to Theseus paleys.
Then was he carven out of his harnéys,
And in a bed ful fair and soft y-brought,
For yit he was in memory and thought,
And alway crying after Emelye.
Duk Theseus, and al his companye,
Is comen hom to Athenes his citee,
With alle bliss and gret solemnitee.
Al be it that this áventure was falle,
He wolde nought discómforten them alle.
Men seyd eek, that Arcita schuld nought dye,
He shal be helèd of his maladye.
And of another thing they were as fayn,
That of them alle ther was non y-slayn,
Al were they sore hurt, and namely one,
That with a spere was piercèd his brest bone.
To other woundes, and to-broken armes,
Some hadden salves, and some hadden charmes,
Drugges of herbes and sage the doctours gave
To drinken, for they wolde their lyves save.
And eek this noble duk, as he wel can,
Comfórteth and honoúreth every man,
And made revel al the longe night,
Unto the straunge lordes, as it was right.
Nor ther was holden no discomfytyng,

But as at justes or at a tourneyinge;
For sothly ther was no discomfiture,
For fallynge doun is but an áventure.
And to be led with fors unto the stake
Unyielden, and with twenty knightes take,
A person allone, withouten helpers moo,
And draggèd forth by arme, foot, and toe,
And eke his steede dryven forth with staves,
With footemen, bothe yeomen and eke knaves,
It was not counted him no vilonye,
Nor any man held it for cowardye.
For which duk Theseus loud anon let crie,
To stynten al rancoúr and al envýe,
The prize was wel on o syde as on other,
And every side lik, as others brother;
And gaf them giftes after there degree,
And fully held a feste dayes three;
And convoyèd the knightes worthily
Out of his toun a journee largely.
And hom went every man the righte way.
Ther was no more, but "Farwel, have good day!"
Of this batayl I wol no more endite,
But speke of Palomon and of Arcyte.
Swelleth the brest of Arcyte, and the sore
Encreaseth at his herte more and more.
The clothred blood, for all the leche-craft,
Corrumpith, and is in his body left,
That neither veyne blood, ne any cutting,
Ne drynk of herbes may be his helpyng.
The vertu expulsif, or animal,
From thilke vertu clepèd natural,
May not the venym voyde, nor expelle.
The pypes of his lunges gan to swelle,
And every muscle in his brest adoun
Is filled with venym and corrupcioun.
There holp him neither, for to get his lyf,
Vomyt up-ward, ne doun-ward laxatif;
Al is to-broken thilke regioún;
Nature hath now no dominacioún.
And certeynly where nature wil not wirche,
Farwel phisik; go bere the man to chirche.
This is the end, that Arcyte moste dye.

For which he sendeth after Emelye,
And Palomon, that was his cosyn deere.
Than seyd he thus, as ye shal after heere.
" Naught may the woful spirit in myn herte
Declare a poynt of all my sorrows smerte
To you, my lady, that I love most;
But I byquethe the service of my ghost
To you aboven every créatúre,
Since that my lyf may now no longer dure.
Allas, the wo! allas, the peynes stronge,
That I for you have suffred, and so longe!
Allas, the deth! alas, myn Emelye!
Allas, departyng of our companye!
Allas, myn hertes queen! allas, my wyf!
Myn hertes lady, ender of my lyf!
What is this world? what asken men to have?
Now with his love, now in his colde grave
Allone withouten eny companye.
Farwel, my swete! farwel, myn Emelye!
And softe take me in your armes tweye,
For love of God, and herk to what I seye.
I have heer with my cosyn Palomon
Had stryf and rancour many a day i-gon,
For love of you, and eek for jelousie.
And Jupiter have on my soul pitye,
To speken of a lover proprely,
With alle circumstances trewely,
That is to seyn, truthe, honour, and knighthede,
Wysdom, humblesse, estate, and high kindrede,
Fredom, and al that longeth to that art,
So Jupiter have of my soule part,
As in this world right now I knowe non
So worthy to be loved as Palomon,
That serveth you, and wil do al his lyf.
And if that ye shal ever be a wyf,
Forget not Palomon, that gentil man."
And with that word his speche faile gan;
For from his herte up to his brest was come
The cold of deth, that him had overcome.
And yet moreover in his armes two
The vital strength is lost, and al i-go.
At last the intellect, withouten more,
That dwellèd in his herte sik and sore,

Gan fayle, when the herte felte death,
Duskèd his eyen two, and fayled his breth.
But on his lady yit he cast his eye;
His laste word was, "Mercy, Emelye!"
His spiryt chaungèd was, and wente there,
As I cam never, I can not tellen where.
Therefore I stynte, I am no dyvynistre;
Of soules fynde I not in this registre,
Nor list I those opynyouns to telle
Of them, though that they knowen where they dwelle.
Arcyte is cold, let Mars his soule take;
Now will I of the storie further speke.
Shrieked Emely, and howlèd Palomon,
And Theseus his sistir took anon
Swoonyng, and bare hir fro the corps away.
What helpeth it to tarye forth the day,
To tellen how she weep bothe eve and morrow?
For in such case wommen can have such sorrow,
When that there housbonds be from them ago,
That for the more part they sorrow so,
Or elles fallen in such maladye,
That atte laste certeynly they dye.
Infýnyt been the sorrows and the teeres
Of olde folk, and folk of tendre yeeres;
So gret a wepyng was ther none certayn,
Whan Ector was i-brought, al fressh i-slayn,
As that ther was for deth of this Theban;
For sorrow of him weepeth child and man
At Thebes, allas! the pitee that was there,
Scratching of cheekes, rending eek of hair.
"Why woldist thou be ded," the wommen crye,
"And haddest gold enow—and Emelye?"
No man mighte gladd the herte of Theseus,
Savyng his olde fader Egeus,
That knew this worldes transmutacioún,
As he hadde seen it tornen up and doun,
Joye after woe, and woe aftir gladnesse:
And shewèd him ensample and likenesse.
"Right as ther deyde never man," quoth he,
"That livèd not in erthe in som degree,
So yet there lyvede never man," he seyde,
"In all this world, that som tyme was not deyde.

This world is but a thurghfare ful of woe,
And we be pilgryms, passyng to and fro;
Deth is an ende of every worldly sore."
And over al this yet seide he moche more
To this effect, ful wysly to exhorte
The peple, that they shulde him récomfórte.
Duk Theseus, with al his busy care,
Cast now about where that the sepulture
Of good Arcyte may best y-makèd be.
And eek most honourable in his degré.
And atte last he took conclusioún,
That where at first Arcite and Palomon
Hadden for love the batail them bytwene,
That in the same grove, swete and greene,
There when he hadde his amorous desires,
His cómpleynt, and for love his hote fyres,
He wolde make a fyr, in which the office
Of funeral he might al áccomplice;
And gave comaunde anon to hakke and hewe
The okes old, and lay them on a rowe,
In hepes wel arrayèd for to burn.
His officers with swifte foot they runne,
And ryde anon at his comaundement.
And after this, Theseus hath men i-sent
After a bier, and it al overspredde
With cloth of golde, the richest that he hadde.
And in the same suit he clad Arcyte;
Upon his hondes were his gloves white;
Eke on his heed a croune of laurel grene;
And in his hond a swerd ful bright and kene.
He leyde him with bare visage on the biere,
Therwith he weep that pity was to heere.
And for the peple shulde see him alle,
Whan it was day he brought them to the halle,
That roreth with the cry and with the sound.
Then cam this woful Theban Palomoun,
With flotery berd, and ruggy asshy heeres,
In clothis blak, y-droppèd al with teeres,
And, passyng all in wepyng, Emelye,
The rewfullest of al the companye.
And in as moche as the service shuld be
The more noble and riche in his degree,
Duk Theseus let forth three steedes bryng,

That trappèd were in steel al gliteryng,
And covered with the armes of Dan Arcyte.
Upon the steedes, that weren grete and white,
Ther seten folk, of which one bar his sheeld,
Another his spere up in his hondes held;
The thridde bar with him his bowe Turkeys,
Of brend gold was the case and eek the harness;
And riden forth a pace with sorrowful chere
Toward the grove, as ye shal after heere.
The nobles of the Grekes that ther were
Upon there shuldres carieden the beere,
With slake pace, and eyen red and wete,
Thurghout the citee, by the maister streete,
That spred was al with blak, and up on hy
With blak the houses are covered utterly.
Upon the right hond went olde Egeus,
And on that other syde duk Theseus,
With vessels in there hand of gold wel fyn,
As ful of hony, mylk, and blood, and wyn;
Eke Palomon, with a gret companye;
And after that com woful Emelye,
With fyr in hond, as was that time the gyse,
To do the office of funeral servise.
High labour, and ful gret apparailyng
Was at the service and at the fyr makyng,
That with his grene top reachèd the sky,
And twenty fathom broad the okes lie;
This is to seyn, the bowes were so brode.
Of straw first was ther leyd ful many a lode.
But how the fyr was makyd up on highte,
And eek the names how the trees highte,
As ook, fir, birch, asp, aldir, holm, popler,
Wilw, elm, plane, assh, box, chestnut, laurer,
Mapul, thorn, beech, hasil, ew, wyppyltree,
How they were felde, shal nought be told for me;
Ne how the goddes ronnen up and doun,
Disheryted of habitacioun,
In which they long had dwelt in rest and pees,
Nymphes and Faunes, and Hamadryades;
Nor how the beestes and the briddes alle
Fledden for feere, when the woode was falle;
Nor how the ground agast was of the light,

That was not wont to see no sonne bright;
Nor how the fyr was laid with straw below,
And thenne with drye stykkes cloven in two,
And thenne with grene woode and spicerie,
And thanne with cloth of gold and jewelry,
And gerlandes hangyng with ful many a flour,
The myrre, the incense with al so sweet odour;
Nor how Arcyte lay among al this,
Nor what richesse aboute his body is;
Nor how that Emely, as was the gyse,
Putt in the fyr of funeral servise;
Nor how she swownèd when she made the fyre,
Nor what she spak, nor what was hir desire;
Nor what jewels men in the fire cast,
When that the fyr was gret and brente fast;
Nor how sum caste their sheeld, and summe their spere,
And of their vestiments, which that they were,
And cuppes ful of wyn, and mylk, they had,
Unto the fyr, that brent as it were mad;
Nor how the Grekes with an huge route
Thre tymes ryden al the fyr aboute
Upon the lefte hond, with an high shoutyng,
And thries with there speres clateryng;
And thries how the ladyes gan to crye;
Nor how that home-ward led was Emelye;
Nor how Arcyte is brent to ashen colde;
Nor howe that liche-wake was y-holde
Al that same night, nor how the Grekes pleye
The wake-pleyes, care I nat to seye;
Who wrastleth best naked, with oyle enoynt,
Nor who that bar him best at every point.
I wil not telle eek how that they be gon
Hom to Athénes when the pley is don.
But shortly to the poynt now wil I wende,
And maken of my longe tale an ende.

By proces and by lengthe of certeyn yeres
Al styntyd is the mournyng and the teeres
Of alle Grekes, by general assent.
Then semèd me ther was a parlement
At Athenes, on a certeyn poynt and case;
Among the whiche poyntes spoken was
To have with certeyn contrees álliaunce,

And have fully of Thebans óbeissance.
For which this noble Theseus anon
Let senden after gentil Palomon,
Unwist of him what was the cause and why;
But in his blake clothes sorrowfully
He cam at his comaundement in hye.
Then sente Theseus for Emelye.
When they were sette, and husht was al the place,
And Theseus abyden hadde a space
Ere eny word cam fro his breste wyse,
His eyen set he where he did devyse,
And with a sad viságe he sighèd stille,
And after that right thus he seide his wille.
" The firste movere of the cause above,
Whan he first made the fayre cheyne of love,
Gret was the effect, and high was his entente;
Wel wist he why, and what therof he mente;
For with that faire cheyne of love he bound
The fyr, the watir, the air, and eek the lond
In certeyn boundes, that they may not flee;
That same prynce and movere eek," quoth he,
" Hath stabled, in this wretched world adoun,
Som certeyn dayes and duracioún
To alle that are engendrid in this place,
Beyond the whiche day they may nat pace,
Though that they yit may wel there dayes abridge;
Ther needeth no auctorité to allege;
For it is provèd by experience,
But that I will declaren my sentence.
Than may men wel by this ordre discerne,
That the same movere stable is and eterne.
Wel may men knowe, but it be a fool,
That every part deryveth from his whole.
For nature hath not take his bygynnyng
Of no partye nor morsel of a thing,
But of a thing that parfyt is and stable,
Descendyng, til it be corumpable.
And therfore of his wyse providence
He hath so wel biset his ordenaunce,
That kinds of thinges and progressiouns
Shallen endure by their successiouns,

And not eterne be withoute lye:
This maistow understand and se with eye.
" Lo, see the ook, that hath long norisschyng
Fro tyme that it gynneth first to springe,
And hath so long a lyf, as we may see,
Yet atte laste wasted is the tree.
" Considereth eek, how that the harde stoon
Under oure foot, on which we trede and goon,
Yit wasteth, as it lieth by the weye.
The brode ryver som tyme wexeth dreye.
The grete townes see we wane and wende.
Then may I see that al thing hath an ende.
" Of man and womman see we wel also,
They liven all in oon of termes two,
That is to seyn, in youthe or elles in age,
All must be deed, the kyng as shal a page;
Sum in his bed, som in the deepe see,
Som in the large feeld, as men may see.
Ther helpeth naught, al goth the same weye.
Thenne may I see wel that al thing shal deye.
What maketh this but Jupiter the kyng?
The which is prynce and cause of alle thing,
Convertyng al unto his propre wille,
From which he is deryvèd, soth to telle.
And against this no créatúre alive
Of no degree avayleth for to stryve.
" Then is it wisdom, as it thenketh me,
To maken vertu of necessitee,
And take it wel, what we can nat eschewe,
And namely what to alle of us is due.
And who-so murmureth aught, he doth folye,
And rebel is to him that is on high.
And certeynly a man hath most honoúr
To deyen in his excellence and flour,
Whan he is certeyn of his goode name.
Then hath he don his freend, nor himself no shame,
And glader ought his freend be of his deth,
When with honoúr is yielden up the breth,
Thanne whan his name all feeble is for age;
And al forgeten is his great coráge.
Thenne is it best, as for a worthi fame,
To dye whan a man is best in name.

The contrary of al this is wilfulnesse.
Why murmur we? why have we hevynesse,
That good Arcyte, of chyvalry the flour,
Departed is, with worship and honoúr
Out of this foule prisoun of this lyf?
Why murmureth heer his cosyn and his wyf
At his welfare, that loven him so wel?
Can he them thank? nay, God wot, not at all,
They bothe his soule and eek themselves offende,
And yet they may their sorrow nat amende.
" How shal I then conclude verrily,
But after woe to counsel jolitee,
And thanke Jupiter for al his grace?
And ere that we departe fro this place,
I counsel that we make, of sorrows two,
One parfyt joye lastyng ever mo:
And loke now wher most sorrow is her-inne,
Ther wil we first amenden and bygynne.
" Sistyr," quoth he, " this is my ful assent,
With al the advice heer of my parlement,
That gentil Palomon, your owne knight,
That serveth you with herte, wil, and might,
And ever hath don, since fyrst tyme ye him knewe,
That ye shal of your grace pity show,
And take him for your housbond and your lord:
Lend me youre hand, for this is oure acord.
Let see now of your wommanly pity.
He is a kynges brothirs son, pardee;
And though he were a pore bachiller,
Since he hath servèd you so many a yeer,
And had for you so gret adversitee,
Hit moste be considered, trust to me.
For gentil mercy greter is than right."
Than seyde he thus to Palomon ful right;
" I trowe ther needeth litel sermonyng
To maken you assente to this thing.
Com neer, and tak your lady by the hond."
Betwix them was i-made anon the bond,
That hightè matrimoyn or mariáge,
By alle the counseil of the baronage.
And thus with bliss and eek with melodye
Hath Palomon i-wedded Emelye.

And God, that al this wyde world hath wrought,
Send him his love, that hath it deere i-bought.
For now is Palomon in al his wealth,
Lyvynge in blisse, richesse, and in health,
And Emely him loveth so tendirly,
And he hir serveth al so gentilly,
That never was ther word bitweene them two
Of jelousy, nor of non othir woe.
Thus endeth Palomon and Emelye;
And God save al this fayre companye! Amen!

THE MYLLERES TALE

Whan that the Knight hadde thus his tale i-told,
In al the route nas ther yong ne old,
That he ne seyde it was a noble story,
And worthi to be drawen in memory;
And namely the gentils everichoon.
Oure Host then lowh and swoor, "So moot I goon,
This goth right wel; unbokeled is the male;
Let se now who schal telle another tale;
For trewely this game is wel bygonne.
Now telleth now, sir Monk, if that ye konne
Somwhat, to quyte with the knightes tale."
The Myller that for drunken was al pale,
So that unnethe upon his hors he sat,
He wold avale nowther hood ne hat,
Ne abyde no man for his curtesye,
But in Pilates voys he gan to crye,
And swor by armes and by blood and bones,
"I can a noble tale for the noones,
With which I wol now quyte the knightes tale."
Oure Hoost saugh wel how dronke he was of ale,
And seyde, "Robyn, abyde, my leve brother,
Som bettre man schal telle us first another;
Abyd, and let us worken thriftyly."
"By Goddes soule!" quod he, "that wol nat I,
For I wol speke, or elles go my way."
Oure Host answerede, "Tel on, a devel way!
Thou art a fool; thy witt is overcome."

"Now herkneth," quod this Myller, "al and some;
But first I make a protestacioun,
That I am dronke, I knowe wel by my soun;
And therfore if that I mys-speke or seye,
Wyte it the ale of Southwerk, I you preye;
For I wol telle a legende and a lyf
Bothe of a carpenter and of his wyf,
How that the clerk hath set the wrightes cappe."
The Reve answered and seyde, "Stynt thi clappe.
Let be thy lewede drunken harlottrye.
It is a synne, and eek a great folye
To apeyren eny man, or him defame,
And eek to brynge wyves in ylle name.
Thou mayst ynowgh of other thinges seyn."
This dronken Miller spak ful sone ageyn,
And seyde, "Leeve brother Osewold,
Who hath no wyf, he is no cokewold.
But I seye not therfore that thou art oon,
Ther been ful goode wyves many oon.
And ever a thousand goode agayns oon badde;
That knowest thou wel thyself, but if thou madde.
Why art thou angry with my tale now?
I have a wyf, pardé! as wel as thow,
Yet nolde I, for the oxen in my plough,
Take upon me more than ynough;
Though that thou deme thiself that thou be oon,
I wol bileeve wel that I am noon.
An housbond schal not be inquisityf
Of Goddes pryveté, ne of his wyf.
So that he fynde Goddes foysoun there,
Of the remenaunt needeth nought enquere."
What schuld I seye, but that this proude Myllere
He nolde his wordes for no man forbere,
But told his cherlisch tale in his manere.
Me athinketh, that I schal reherce it heere;
And therfor every gentil wight I preye,
For Goddes love, as deme nat that I seye,
Of yvel entent, but for I moot reherse
Here wordes alle, al be they better or werse,
Or elles falsen som of my mateere.

And therfor who-so list it nat to heere,
Turne over the leef, and cheese another tale;
For he schal fynde ynowe bothe gret and smale,
Of storial thing that toucheth gentilesse,
And eek moralité, and holynesse.
Blameth nat me, if that ye cheese amys.
The Miller is a cherl, ye knowe wel this;
So was the Reeve, and othir many mo,
And harlotry they tolden bothe two.
Avyseth you, and put me out of blame;
And men schulde nat make ernest of game.

Whilom ther was dwellyng at Oxenford
A riche gnof, that gestes heeld to boorde,
And of his craft he was a carpenter.
With him ther was dwellyng a pore scoler,
Hadde lerned art, but al his fantasye
Was torned for to lerne astrologye,
And cowde a certeyn of conclusiouns
To deme by interrogaciouns,
If that men axed him in certeyn houres,
Whan that men schuld han drought or ellys schoures,
Or if men axed him what schulde bifalle
Of everything, I may nought reken hem alle.
This clerk was cleped heende Nicholas;
Of derne love he cowde and of solas;
And therwith he was sleigh and ful privé,
And lik to a mayden meke for to se.
A chambir had he in that hostillerye
Alone, withouten eny compaignye,
Ful fetisly i-dight with herbes soote,
And he himself as swete as is the roote
Of lokorys, or eny cetewale.
His almagest, and bookes gret and smale,
His astrylabe, longyng to his art,
His augrym stoones, leyen faire apart
On schelves couched at his beddes heed,
His presse i-covered with a faldyng reed.
And al above ther lay a gay sawtrye,
On which he made a-nightes melodye,
So swetely, that al the chambur rang;
And *Angelus ad virginem* he sang.

And after that he sang the kynges note;
Ful often blissed was his mery throte,
And thus this sweete clerk his tyme spente,
After his frendes fyndyng and his rente.
This carpenter hadde weddid newe a wyf,
Which that he lovede more than his lyf;
Of eyghteteene yeer sche was of age,
Gelous he was, and heeld hir narwe in cage,
For sche was wilde and yong, and he was old,
And demed himself belik a cokewold,
He knew not Catoun, for his wit was rude,
That bad man schulde wedde his similitude.
Men schulde wedde aftir here astaat,
For eelde and youthe ben often at debaat.
But syn that he was brought into the snare,
He moste endure, as othere doon, his care.
Fair was the yonge wyf, and therwithal
As eny wesil hir body gent and smal.
A seynt sche werede, barred al of silk;
A barm-cloth eek as whit as morne mylk
Upon hir lendes, ful of many a gore.
Whit was hir smok, and browdid al byfore
And eek byhynde on hir coler aboute,
Of cole-blak silk, withinne and eek withoute.
The tapes of hir white voluper
Weren of the same sute of hire coler;
Hir filet brood of silk y-set ful heye.
And certeynly sche hadd a licorous eyghe;
Ful smal y-pulled weren hir browes two,
And tho were bent, as blak as any slo.
Sche was wel more blisful on to see
Than is the newe perjonette tree;
And softer than the wol is of a wethir.
And by hir gurdil hyng a purs of lethir,
Tassid with silk, and perled with latoun.
In al this world to seken up and doun
There nys no man so wys, that couthe thenche
So gay a popillot, or such a wenche.
For brighter was the schynyng of hir hewe,
Than in the Tour the noble i-forged newe.
But of hir song, it was as lowde and yerne
As eny swalwe chiteryng on a berne.
Therto sche cowde skippe, and make a game,

As eny kyde or calf folwyng his dame.
Hir mouth was sweete as bragat is or meth,
Or hoord of apples, layd in hay or heth.
Wynsyng sche was, as is a joly colt;
Long as a mast, and upright as a bolt.
A broch sche bar upon hir loue coleer,
As brod as is the bos of a bocleer.
Hir schos were laced on hir legges heyghe;
Sche was a primerole and a piggesneyghe,
For eny lord have liggyng in his bedde,
Or yet for eny good yeman to wedde.
Now sir, and eft sir, so bifel the cas,
That on a day this heende Nicholas
Fil with this yonge wyf to rage and pleye
Whil that hir housbond was at Oseneye,
As clerkes ben ful sotil and ful queynte.
And pryvely he caught hir by the queynte,
And seyde, " I-wis, but if I have my wille,
For derne love of the, lemman, I spille."
And heeld hir harde by the haunche boones,
And seyde, " Lemman, love me wel at ones,
Or I wol dye, as wisly God me save."
And sche sprang out as doth a colt in trave:
And with hir heed sche wriede fast awey,
And seyde, " I wol nat kisse the, by my fey!
Why let be," quod sche, " lat be thou, Nicholas
Or I wol crye out harrow and allas!
Do wey youre handes for youre curtesye!"
This Nicholas gan mercy for to crye,
And spak so faire, and profred him so faste,
That sche hir love him graunted atte laste,
And swor hir oth by seynt Thomas of Kent,
That sche wolde be at his commaundement,
When that sche may hir leysir wel aspye.
" Myn housbond is so ful of jelousie,
That but ye wayten wel, and be pryvé,
I woot right wel I am but deed," quod sche:
" Ye mosten be ful derne as in this caas."
" Thereof ne care the nought," quod Nicholas:
" A clerk hath litherly byset his while,
But if he cowde a carpenter bygyle."
And thus they ben acorded and i-sworn
To wayte a tyme, as I have told biforn.

Whan Nicholas hadde doon thus every del,
And thakked hire aboute the lendys wel,
He kist hir sweet, and taketh his sawtrye,
And pleyeth fast, and maketh melodye.
Than fyl it thus, that to the parisch chirche
Cristes owen workes for to wirche,
This goode wyf went on an haly day;
Hir forheed schon as bright as eny day,
So was it waisschen, when sche leet hir werk.
Now ther was of that chirche a parisch clerk,
The which that was i-cleped Absolon.
Crulle was his heer, and as the gold it schon,
And strowted as a fan right large and brood;
Ful streyt and evene lay his joly schood.
His rode was reed, his eyghen gray as goos,
With Powles wyndowes corven in his schoos.
In his hoses reed he wente fetusly.
I-clad he was ful smal and propurly,
Al in a kirtel of a fyn wachet,
Schapen with goores in the newe get.
And therupon he had a gay surplys,
As whyt as is the blosme upon the rys.
A mery child he was, so God me save;
Wel couthe he lete blood, and clippe and schave,
And make a chartre of lond and acquitaunce.
In twenty maners he coude skippe and daunce,
After the scole of Oxenforde tho,
And with his legges casten to and fro;
And pleyen songes on a smal rubible;
Ther-to he sang som tyme a lowde quynyble.
And as wel coude he pleye on a giterne.
In al the toun nas brewhous ne taverne
That he ne visitede with his solas,
Ther as that any gaylard tapster was.
Bot soth to say he was somdel squaymous
Of fartyng, and of speche daungerous.
This Absolon, that joly was and gay,
Goth with a senser on the haly day,
Sensing the wyves of the parisch faste;
And many a lovely look on hem he caste,
And namely on this carpenteres wyf;
To loke on hire him thought a mery lyf;
Sche was so propre, sweete, and licorous.

I dar wel sayn, if sche hadde ben a mous,
And he a cat, he wold hir bent anoon.
This parisch clerk, this joly Absolon,
Hath in his herte such a love longyng,
That of no wyf ne took he noon offryng;
Aor curtesy, he seyde, he wolde noon.
The moone at night ful cleer and brighte schoon,
And Absolon his giterne hath i-take,
For paramours he seyde he wold awake.
And forth he goth, jolyf and amerous,
Til he cam to the carpenteres hous,
A litel after the cok hadde y-crowe,
And dressed him up by a schot wyndowe
That was under the carpenteres walle.
He syngeth in his voys gentil and smalle—
" Now, deere lady, if thi wille be,
I praye yow that ye wol rewe on me."
Ful wel acordyng to his gyternynge.
This carpenter awook, and herde him synge,
And spak unto his wyf, and sayde anoon,
" What Alisoun, herestow not Absolon,
That chaunteth thus under oure boures wal? "
And sche answered hir housbond therwithal,
" Yis, God woot, Johan, I heere it every del."
This passeth forth; what wil ye bet than wel?
Fro day to day this joly Absolon
So woweth hire, that him is wo-bigon.
He waketh al the night and al the day,
To kembe his lokkes brode and made him gay.
He woweth hire by mene and by brocage,
And swor he wolde ben hir owne page.
He syngeth crowyng as a nightyngale;
And sent hire pyment, meth, and spiced ale,
And wafres pypyng hoot out of the gleede;
And for sche was of toune, he profrede meede.
For som folk wol be wonne for richesse,
And som for strokes, som for gentillesse.
Som tyme, to schewe his lightnes and maistrye,
He pleyeth Herodz on a scaffold hye.
But what avayleth him as in this caas?
Sche loveth so this heende Nicholas,
That Absolon may blowe the bukkes horn;
He ne hadde for al his labour but a skorn.

And thus sche maketh Absolon hir ape,
And al his ernest torneth to a jape.
Ful soth is this proverbe, it is no lye,
Men seyn right thus alway, the neye slye
Maketh the ferre leefe to be loth.
For though that Absolon be wood or wroth,
Bycause that he fer was from here sight,
This Nicholas hath stonden in his light.
Now bere the wel, thou heende Nicholas,
For Absolon may wayle and synge allas.
And so bifelle it on a Satyrday
This carpenter was gon to Osenay,
And heende Nicholas and Alisoun
Acordid ben to this conclusioun,
That Nicholas schal schapen hem a wyle
This sely jelous housbond to begyle;
And if so were this game wente aright,
Sche schulde slepe in his arm al night,
For this was hire desir and his also.
And right anoon, withouten wordes mo,
This Nicholas no lenger wold he tarye,
But doth ful softe into his chambur carye
Both mete and drynke for a day or tweye.
And to hir housbond bad hir for to seye,
If that he axed after Nicholas,
Sche schulde seye, sche wiste nat wher he was;
Of al that day sche saw him nat with eye;
Sche trowed he were falle in som maladye,
For no cry that hir mayden cowde him calle
He nolde answere, for nought that may bifalle.
Thus passeth forth al that ilke Satyrday,
That Nicholas stille in his chambre lay,
And eet, and drank, and dede what him leste
Til Soneday the sonne was gon to reste.
This sely carpenter hath gret mervaile
Of Nicholas, or what thing may him ayle,
And seyde, "I am adrad, by seynt Thomas!
It stondeth nat aright with Nicholas;
God schilde that he deyde sodeinly.
This world is now ful tykel sikerly;
I saugh to-day a corps y-born to chirche,
That now on Monday last I saugh him wirche.
Go up," quod he unto his knave, "anoon;

Clepe at his dore, and knokke with a stoon;
Loke how it is, and telle me boldely."
This knave goth him up ful sturdily,
And at the chambir dore whil that he stood,
He cryed and knokked as that he were wood;
"What how? what do ye, mayster Nicholay!
How may ye slepen al this longe day?"
But al for nought, he herde nat o word.
An hole he fond right lowe upon a boord,
Ther as the cat was wont in for to creepe,
And at that hole he loked in ful deepe,
And atte laste he hadde of him a sight.
This Nicholas sat ever gapyng upright,
As he hadde loked on the newe moone.
Adoun he goth, and tolde his mayster soone,
In what aray he sawh this ilke man.
This carpenter to blessen him bygan,
And seyde "Now help us, seynte Frideswyde!
A man woot litel what him schal betyde.
This man is falle with his astronomye
In som woodnesse, or in som agonye.
I though ay wel how that it schulde be.
Men schulde nought knowe of Goddes pryvyté.
Ye! blessed be alwey a lewed man,
That nat but oonly his bileeve can.
So ferde another clerk with astronomye;
He walked in the feeldes for to prye
Upon the sterres, what ther schulde bifalle,
Til he was in a marle pit i-falle.
He saugh nat that. But yet, by seint Thomas,
Me reweth sore for heende Nicholas;
He schal be ratyd of his studyyng,
If that I may, by Jhesu heven kyng!
Gete me a staf, that I may underspore,
Whil that thou, Robyn, hevest up the dore:
He schal out of his studyyng, as I gesse."
And to the chambir dore he gan him dresse.
His knave was a strong karl for the noones,
And by the hasp he haf it up at oones;
And in the floor the dore fil doun anoon.
This Nicholas sat stille as eny stoon,
And ever he gapyed up-ward to the eyr.
This carpenter wende he were in despeir,

And hent him by the schuldres mightily,
And schook him harde, and cryede spitously,
" What, Nicholas? what how, man? loke adoun;
Awake, and thynk on Cristes passioun.
I crowche the from elves and from wightes."
Therwith the night-spel seyde hie anon rightes,
On the foure halves of the hous aboute,
And on the threisshfold of the dore withoute.
" Lord Jhesu Crist, and seynte Benedight,
Blesse this house from every wikkede wight,
Fro nyghtes mare werye the with Pater-noster;
Wher wonestow now, seynte Petres soster? "
And atte laste, heende Nicholas
Gan for to syke sore, and seyde, " Allas!
Schal al the world be lost eftsones now? "
This carpenter answerde, " What seystow?
What? thenk on God, as we doon, men that
swynke."
This Nicholas answerde, " Fette me drynke;
And after wol I speke in pryvytè
Of certeyn thing that toucheth the and me;
I wol telle it non other man certayn."
This carpenter goth forth, and comth agayn,
And brought of mighty ale a large quart.
Whan ech of hem y-dronken had his part,
This Nicholas his dore gan to schitte,
And dede this carpenter doun by him sitte,
And seide, " Johan, myn host ful leve and deere,
Thou schalt upon thy trouthe swere me heere,
That to no wight thou schalt this counsel wreye,
For it is Cristes counsel that I seye,
And if thou telle it man, thou art forlore;
For this vengaunce thou schalt han therfore,
That if thou wreye me, thou schalt be wood."
" Nay, Crist forbede it for his holy blood! "
Quod tho this sely man, " I am no labbe,
Though I it say, I am nought leef to gabbe.
Say what thou wolt, I schal it never telle
To child ne wyf, by him that harwed helle! "
" Now, Johan," quod Nicholas," " I wol not
lye:
I have i-founde in myn astrologye,
As I have loked in the moone bright,

That now on Monday next, at quarter night,
Schal falle a reyn, and that so wilde and wood,
That half so gret was never Noes flood.
This worlde," he seyde, " more than an hour
Schal ben i-dreynt, so hidous in the schour:
Thus schal mankynde drench, and leese his lyf."
This carpenter answered, " Allas, my wyf!
And shal she drenche? allas, myn Alisoun!"
For sorwe of this he fel almost adoun,
And seyde, " Is ther no remedy in this caas? "
" Why yis, for Gode," quod heende Nicholas;
" If thou wolt werken aftir lore and reed;
Thou maist nought worke after thin owen heed.
For thus seith Salomon, that was ful trewe,
Werke by counseil, and thou schalt nat rewe.
And if thou worken wolt by good counsail,
I undertake, withouten mast and sail,
Yet schal I saven hir, and the, and me.
Hastow nat herd how saved was Noe,
Whan that our Lord hadde warned him biforn,
That al the world with watir schulde be lorn? "
" Yis," quod this carpenter, " ful yore ago."
" Hast ow nought herd," quod Nicholas, " also
The sorwe of Noe with his felaschipe,
That he hadde or he gat his wyf to schipe?
Him hadde wel lever, I dar wel undertake,
At thilke tyme, than alle his wetheres blake,
That sche hadde a schip hirself allone.
And therfore wostow what is best to doone?
This axeth hast, and of an hasty thing
Men may nought preche or make taryyng.
Anon go gete us fast into this in
A knedyng trowh or elles a kemelyn,
For ech of us; but loke that they be large,
In which that we may rowe as in a barge,
And have therin vitaille suffisant
But for o day; fy on the remenant;
The water schal aslake and gon away
Aboute prime upon the nexte day.
But Robyn may not wite of this, thy knave,
Ne ek thy mayde Gille I may not save;
Aske nought why; for though thou aske me,
I wol nat tellen Goddes pryveté.

Sufficeth the, but if that thy wittes madde,
To have as gret a grace as Noe hadde.
Thy wyf schal I wel saven out of doute.
Go now thy wey, and speed the heer aboute:
And whan thou hast for hir, and the, and me,
I-goten us this knedyng tubbes thre,
Than schalt thou hange hem in the roof ful hie,
That no man of oure purveaunce aspye;
And whan thou thus hast doon as I have seyd,
And hast our vitaille faire in hem y-leyd,
And eek an ax to smyte the corde a-two
Whan that the water cometh, that we may goo,
And breke an hole an hye upon the gable
Into the gardyn ward over the stable,
That we may frely passen forth oure way,
Whan that the grete schour is gon away;
Than schaltow swymme as mery, I undertake,
As doth the white doke aftir hir drake;
Than wol I clepe, How Alisoun, how Jon,
Beoth merye, for the flood passeth anon.
And thou wolt seye, Heyl, maister Nicholay,
Good morn, I see the wel, for it is day.
And than schul we be lordes al oure lyf
Of al the world, as Noe and his wyf.
But of oo thing I warne the ful right,
Be wel avysed of that ilke nyght,
That we ben entred into schippes boord,
That non of us ne speke not a word,
Ne clepe ne creye, but be in his preyere,
For it is Goddes owne heste deere.
Thy wyfe and thou most hangen fer a-twynne,
For that bitwixe you schal be no synne,
No more in lokyng than ther schal in dede.
This ordynaunce is seyd; so God me speede.
To morwe at night, whan men ben aslepe,
Into our knedyng tubbes wol we crepe,
And sitte ther, abydyng Goddes grace.
Go now thy way, I have no lenger space
To make of this no lenger sermonyng;
Men seyn thus, send the wyse, and sey no thing;
Thou art so wys, it needeth nat the teche.
Go, save oure lyf, and that I the byseche."
This seely carpenter goth forth his way,

Ful ofte he seyd, " Allas, and weylaway! "
And to his wyf he told his pryveté,
And sche was war, and knew it bet than he,
What al this queinte caste was for to seye.
But natheles sche ferd as sche schulde deye,
And seyde, " Allas! go forth thy way anoon,
Help us to skape, or we be ded echon.
I am thy verray trewe wedded wyf;
Go, deere spouse, and help to save oure lyf."
Lo, which a gret thing is affecciouu!
A man may dye for ymaginacioun,
So deepe may impressioun be take.
This seely carpenter bygynneth quake;
Him thenketh verrayly that he may se
Noes flood come walking as the see
To drenchen Alisoun, his hony deere.
He weepeth, wayleth, he maketh sory cheere;
He siketh, with ful many a sory swough.
And goth, and geteth him a knedyng trough,
And after that a tubbe, and a kymelyn,
And pryvely he sent hem to his in,
And heng hem in the roof in pryveté.
His owne honde than made he laddres thre,
To clymben by the ronges and the stalkes
Unto the tubbes hangyng in the balkes;
And hem vitaylede, bothe trough and tubbe,
With breed and cheese, with good ale in a jubbe,
Suffisyng right ynough as for a day.
But or that he hadde maad al this array,
He sent his knave and eek his wenche also
Upon his neede to Londone for to go.
And on the Monday, whan it drew to nyght,
He schette his dore, withouten candel light,
And dressed al this thing as it schulde be.
And schortly up they clumben alle thre.
They seten stille wel a forlong way:
" Now, *Pater noster*, clum," quod Nicholay,
And " clum," quod Jon, and " clum," quod
Alisoun.
This carpenter seyd his devocioun,
And stille he sitt, and byddeth his prayere,
Ay waytyng on the reyn, if he it heere.
The deede sleep, for verray busynesse,

Fil on this carpenter, right as I gesse,
Abowten courfew tyme, or litel more.
For travail of his goost he groneth sore,
And eft he routeth, for his heed myslay.
Doun of the laddir stalketh Nicholay,
And Alisoun ful softe adoun hir spedde.
Withouten wordes mo they goon to bedde;
Ther as the carpenter was wont to lye,
Ther was the revel and the melodye.
And thus lith Alisoun and Nicholas,
In busynesse of myrthe and of solas,
Til that the belles of laudes gan to rynge,
And freres in the chauncel gan to synge.

This parissch clerk, this amerous Absolon,
That is for love so harde and woo bygon,
Upon the Monday was at Osenaye
With company, him to desporte and playe;
And axed upon caas a cloysterer
Ful pryvely after the carpenter;
And he drough him apart out of the chirche,
And sayde, " Nay, I say him nat here wirche
Syn Satirday: I trow that he be went
For tymber, ther our abbot hath him sent.
For he is wont for tymber for to goo,
And dwellen at the Graunge a day or tuo.
Or elles he is at his hous certayn.
Wher that he be, I can nat sothly sayn."

This Absolon ful joly was and light,
And thoughte, " Now is tyme to wake al night,
For sikerly I sawh him nought styrynge
Aboute his dore, syn day bigan to sprynge.
So mote I thryve, I schal at cokkes crowe
Ful pryvely go knokke at his wyndowe,
That stant ful lowe upon his browres wal;
To Alisoun than wol I tellen al
My love-longyng; for yet I schal not mysse
That atte leste wey I schal hir kisse.
Som maner comfort schal I have, parfay!
My mouth hath icched al this longe day;
That is a signe of kissyng atte leste.
Al nyght I mette eek I was at a feste.
Therfore I wol go slepe an hour or tweye,
And al the night than wol I wake and pleye."

Whan that the firste cok hath crowe, anoon
Up ryst this jolyf lover Absolon,
And him arrayeth gay, at poynt devys.
But first he cheweth greyn and lycoris,
To smellen swete, or he hadde kempt his heere.
Under his tunge a trewe love he beere,
For therby wende he to be gracious.
He rometh to the carpenteres hous,
And stille he stant under the schot wyndowe;
Unto his brest it raught, it was so lowe;
And softe he cowhith with a semysoun:
" What do ye, honycomb, swete Alisoun?
My fayre bryd, my swete cynamome,
Awake, lemman myn, and speketh to me.
Ful litel thynke ye upon my wo,
That for youre love I swelte ther I go.
No wonder is if that I swelte and swete,
I morne as doth a lamb after the tete.
I-wis, lemman, I have such love-longyng,
That like a turtil trewe is my moornyng,
I may not ete no more than a mayde."
" Go fro the wyndow, jakke fool," sche sayde
" As help me God, it wol not be, compaine.
I love another, and elles were I to blame,
Well bet than the, by Jhesu, Absolon.
Go forth thy wey, or I wol cast a stoon;
And let me slepe, a twenty devel way!"
" Allas!" quod Absolon, " and weylaway!
That trewe love was ever so yll bysett;
Thanne kisseth me, syn it may be no bett,
For Jesus love, and for the love of me."
" Wilt thou than go thy wey therwith?" quod sche.
" Ye, certes, lemman," quod this Absolon.
" Than mak the redy," quod sche, " I come anon."
This Absolon doun sette him on his knees,
And seide, " I am a lord at alle degrees;
For after this I hope ther cometh more;
Lemman, thy grace, and, swete bryd, thyn ore."
The wyndow she undyd, and that in hast;
" Have doon," quod sche, " com of, and speed the fast,

Lest that our neyghebores the aspye."
This Absolon gan wipe his mouth ful drye,
Derk was the night as picche or as a cole,
Out atte wyndow putte sche hir hole:
And Absolon him fel no bet ne wers,
But with his mouth he kist hir naked ers
Ful savorly. Whan he was war of this,
Abak he sterte, and thought it was amys,
For wel he wist a womman hath no berd.
He felt a thing al rough and long i-herd,
And seyde, " Fy, allas! what have I do? "
" Te-hee! " quod sche, and clapte the wyndow to;
And Absolon goth forth a sory paas.
" A berd, a berd! " quod heende Nicholas;
" By Goddes corps, this game goth fair and wel."
This seely Absolon herd every del,
And on his lippe he gan for angir byte;
And to himself he seyde, " I schal the quyte."
Who rubbith now, who froteth now his lippes
With dust, with sand, with straw, with cloth, with chippes,
But Absolon? that seith ful ofte, " Allas,
My soule bytake I unto Sathanas!
But me were lever than alle this toun," quod he,
" Of this dispit awroken for to be.
Allas! " quod he, " allas! I nadde y-bleynt! "
His hoote love was cold, and al i-queint.
For fro that tyme that he hadde kist her ers,
Of paramours ne sette he nat a kers,
For he was helyd of his maledye;
Ful ofte paramours he gan deffye,
And wept as doth a child that is i-bete.
A softe paas went he over the strete
Unto a smyth, men clepith daun Gerveys,
That is his forge smythede plowh-harneys;
He scharpeth schar and cultre bysily.
This Absolon knokketh al esily.
And seyde, " Undo, Gerveys, and that anoon."
" What, who art thou? " " It am I Absolon."
" What? Absolón, what for Cristes swete tree!
Why ryse ye so rathe? *benedicite*,
What eyleth you? some gay gurl, God it woot,
Hath brought you thus upon the verytrot;

By seinte Noet! ye wote wel what I mene."
This Absolon ne roughte nat a bene
Of al this pley, no word agayn he yaf;
For he hadde more tow on his distaf
Than Gerveys knew, and seyde, "Freend so deere,
That hote cultre in the chymney heere
As lene it me, I have therwith to doone;
I wol it bring agayn to the ful soone."
Gerveys answerde, "Certes, were it gold,
Or in a poke nobles all untold,
Ye schul him have, as I am trewe smyth.
Ey, Cristes fote! what wil ye do therwith?"
"Therof," quod Absolon, "be as be may;
I schal wel telle it the to morwe day;"
And caughte the cultre by the colde stele.
Ful soft out at the dore he gan it stele,
And wente unto the carpenteres wal.
He cowheth first, and knokketh therwithal
Upon the wyndow, right as he dede er.
This Alisoun answerde, "Who is ther
That knokketh so? I warant it a theef."
"Why nay," quod he, "God woot, my sweete leef,
I am thyn Absolon, o my derlyng.
Of gold," quod he, "I have the brought a ryng;
My mooder yaf it me, so God me save!
Ful fyn it is, and therto wel i-grave;
This wol I yive the, if thou me kisse."
This Nicholas was risen for to pysse,
And thought he wold amenden al the jape,
He schulde kisse his ers or that he skape.
And up the wyndow dyde he hastily,
And out his ers putteth he pryvely
Over the buttok, to the haunche bon.
And therwith spak this clerk, this Absolon,
"Spek, sweete bryd, I wot nat wher thou art."
This Nicholas anon let flee a fart,
As gret as it hadde ben a thundir dent,
And with that strook he was almost i-blent;
And he was redy with his yren hoot,
And Nicholas amid the ers he smoot.
Of goth the skyn an hande brede aboute,

The hoote cultre brente so his toute;
And for the smert he wende for to dye;
As he were wood, anon he gan to crye,
"Help, watir, watir, help, for Goddes herte!"
This carpentir out of his slumber sterte,
And herd on crye watir, as he wer wood.
He thought, "Allas, for now cometh Noes flood!"
He sit him up withoute wordes mo,
And with his ax he smot the corde a-two;
And doun he goth; he fond nowthir to selle
No breed ne ale, til he com to the selle
Upon the floor, and ther aswoun he lay.
Up styrt hir Alisoun, and Nicholay,
And cryden, "out and harrow!" in the strete,
The neyghebours bothe smal and grete,
In ronnen, for to gauren on this man,
That yet aswowne lay, bothe pale and wan;
For with the fal he brosten had his arm.
But stond he muste to his owne harm,
For whan he spak, he was anon born doun
With heende Nicholas and Alisoun.
They tolden every man that he was wood;
He was agast and feerd of Noes flood
Thurgh fantasie, that of his vanité
He hadde i-bought him knedyng tubbes thre,
And hadde hem hanged in the roof above;
And that he preyed hem for Goddes love
To sitten in the roof *par compaignye*.
The folk gan lawhen at his fantasye;
Into the roof they kyken, and they gape,
And torne al his harm into a jape.
For whatsoever the carpenter answerde,
Hit was for nought, no man his resoun herde,
With othis greet he was so sworn adoun,
That he was holden wood in al the toun.
For every clerk anon right heeld with othir:
They seyde, "The man was wood, my leeve brother;"
And every man gan lawhen at his stryf.
Thus swyved was the carpenteres wyf
For al his kepyng and his gelousye;

And Absolon hath kist hir nethir ye;
And Nicholas is skaldid in his towte.
This tale is doon, and God save al the route.

THE REEVES TALE

WHAN folk hadde lawhen of this nyce caas
Of Absolon and heende Nicholas,
Dyverse folk dyversely they seyde,
But for the moste part they lowh and pleyde;
Ne at this tale I sawh no man him greve,
But it were oonly Osewald the Reeve.
Bycause he was of carpentrye craft,
A litel ire is in his herte laft;
He gan to grucche and blamed it a lite.
"So theek," quod he, "ful wel coude I the quyte
With blerynge of a prowd mylleres ye,
If that me luste speke of ribaudye.
But yk am old; me list not pleye for age;
Gras tyme is doon, my foddir is now forage.
My whyte top writeth myn olde yeeres;
Myn hert is al so moulyd as myn heeres;
But yit I fare as doth an open-ers;
That ilke fruyt is ever lenger the wers,
Til it be rote in mullok or in stree.
We olde men, I drede, so fare we,
Til we be roten, can we nat be rype;
We hoppen alway, whil the world wol pype;
For in oure wil ther stiketh ever a nayl,
To have an hoor heed and a greene tayl,
As hath a leek; for though oure might be doon,
Oure wil desireth folye ever in oon;
For whan we may nat do, than wol we speke,
Yet in oure aisshen old is fyr i-reke.
Foure gledys have we, which I schal devyse,
Avanting, lyyng, angur, coveytise.
This foure sparkys longen unto eelde.
Oure olde lymes mowen be unweelde,
But wil ne schal nat fayle us, that is soth.
And yet I have alwey a coltes toth,

As many a yeer as it is passed henne,
Syn that my tappe of lyf bygan to renne.
For sikirlik, whan I was born, anon
Deth drough the tappe of lyf, and leet it goon;
And now so longe hath the tappe i-ronne,
Til that almost al empty is the tonne.
The streem of lyf now droppeth on the chymbe.
The sely tonge may wel rynge and chimbe
Of wrecchednes, that passed is ful yoore:
With olde folk, sauf dotage, is no more."
  Whan that oure Host hadde herd this sermonyng,
He gan to speke as lordly as a kyng,
And seyde, "What amounteth al this wit?
What? schul we speke al day of holy wryt?
The devyl made a reve for to preche,
Or of a sowter, schipman or a leche.
Sey forth thi tale, and tarye nat the tyme;
Lo heer is Depford, and it is passed prime;
Lo Grenewich, ther many a schrewe is inne;
It were al tyme thi tale for to bygynne."
  "Now, sires," quod this Osewold the Reeve,
"I pray yow alle, that noon of you him greeve,
Though I answere, and somwhat sette his howve,
For leeful is with force force to showve.
This dronken Myllere hath i-tolde us heer,
How that bygiled was a carpenter,
Peradventure in scorn, for I am oon;
And by your leve, I schal him quyte anoon.
Right in his cherles termes wol I speke;
I praye to God his nekke mot to-breke!
He can wel in myn eye seen a stalke,
But in his owne he can nought seen a balke."

At Trompyngtoun, nat fer fro Cantebrigge,
Ther goth a brook, and over that a brigge,
Upon the whiche brook ther stant a melle:
And this is verray sothe that I you telle.
A meller was ther dwellyng many a day,
As eny pecok he was prowd and gay;
Pipen he coude, and fissh, and nettys beete,
And turne cuppes, wrastle wel, and scheete.
Ay by his belt he bar a long panade,

And of a swerd ful trenchaunt was the blade.
A joly popper bar he in his pouche;
Ther no man for perel durst him touche.
A Scheffeld thwitel bar he in his hose.
Round was his face, and camois was his nose.
As pyled as an ape was his skulle.
He was a market-beter at the fulle.
Ther durste no wight hand upon him legge,
That he ne swor anon he schuld abegge.
A theef he was, for-soth, of corn and mele,
And that a sleigh, and usyng for to stele.
His name was hoote deynous Symekyn.
A wyf he hadde, come of noble kyn;
The persoun of the toun hir fader was.
With hire he yaf ful many a panne of bras,
For that Symkyn schuld in his blood allye.
Sche was i-fostryd in a nonnerye;
For Smykyn wolde no wyf, as he sayde
But sche were wel i-norissched and a mayde,
To saven his estaat and yomanrye.
And sche was proud and pert as is a pye.
A ful fair sighte was ther upon hem two;
On haly dayes bifore hir wold he go
With his typet y-bounde about his heed;
And sche cam aftir in a gyte of reed,
And Symkyn hadde hosen of the same.
Ther durste no wight clepe hir but *madame;*
Was noon so hardy walkyng by the weye,
That with hir dorste rage or elles pleye,
But if he wolde be slayn ot Symekyn
With panade, or with knyf, or boydekyn;
For gelous folk ben perilous evermo,
Algate they wolde here wyves wende so.
And eek for sche was somdel smoterlich,
Sche was as deyne as water in a dich,
As ful of hokir, and of bissemare.
Hir thoughte ladyes oughten hir to spare,
What for hir kynreed and hir nortelrye,
That shee hadde lerned in the nonnerye.
O doughter hadden they betwix hem two,
Of twenti yeer, withouten eny mo,
Savyng a child that was of half yer age
In cradil lay, and was a proper page.

This wenche thikke and wel i-growen was,
With camoys nose, and eyghen gray as glas;
And buttokkes brode, and brestes round and hye,
But right fair was hir heer, I wol nat lye.
The persoun of the toun, for sche was feir,
In purpos was to maken hir his heir,
Bothe of his catel and his mesuage,
And straunge made it of hir mariage.
His purpos was to bystowe hir hye
Into som worthy blood of ancetrye;
For holy chirche good moot be despendid
On holy chirche blood that is descendid.
Therfore he wolde his joly blood honoure,
Though that he schulde holy chirche devoure.
Gret soken hadde this meller, oute of doute,
With whete and malt, of al the londe aboute;
And namely ther was a gret collegge,
Men clepe it the Soler-halle of Cantebregge,
Ther was here whete and eek here malt i-grounde.
And on a day it happed on a stounde,
Syk lay the mauncyple on a maledye,
Men wenden wisly that he schulde dye;
For which this meller stal both mele and corn
A thousend part more than byforn.
For ther biforn he stal but curteysly;
But now he is a theef outrageously.
For which the wardeyn chidde and made fare,
But therof sette the meller not a tare;
He crakkede boost, and swor it was nat so.
Thanne weren there poore scoleres tuo,
That dwelten in the halle of which I seye;
Testyf they were, and lusty for to pleye;
And, oonly for here mirthe and revelrye,
Uppon the wardeyn bysily they crye,
To yeve hem leve but a litel stounde
To go to melle and see here corn i-grounde;
And hardily they dursten leye here nekke,
The meller schulde nat stel hem half a pekke
Of corn by sleighte, ne by force hem reve.
And atte last the wardeyn yaf hem leve.
Johan hight that oon, and Alayn hight that other;
Of o toun were they born that highte Strothir,

Fer in the North, I can nat telle where.
This Aleyn maketh redy al his gere,
And on an hors the sak he cast anoon:
Forth goth Aleyn the clerk, and also Jon,
With good swerd and with bocler by her side.
Johan knew the way, that hem needith no gyde;
And at the mylle the sak adoun he layth.
Alayn spak first: "Al heil! Symond, in faith
How fares thy faire doughter and thy wyf?"
"Alayn, welcome," quod Symond, "by my lyf!
And Johan also; how now! what do ye here?"
"By God!" quod Johan, "Symond, neede has na peere.
Him falles serve himself that has na swayn,
Or elles he is a fon, as clerkes sayn.
Our mancyple, as I hope, wil be deed,
Swa werkes ay the wanges in his heed.
And therfore I is come, and eek Aleyn,
To grynde oure corn, and carie it ham ageyn.
I prey you speed us in al that ye may."
"It schal be doon," quod Symkyn, "by my fay!
What wol ye do whil that it is in hande?"
"By God! right by the hope wol I stande,"
Quod Johan, "and se how that the corn gas inne.
Yet sawh I never, by my fader kynne!
How that the hoper waggis to and fra."
Aleyn answered, "Johan, and wiltow swa?
Than wol I be bynethe, by my croun!
And se how that the mele fallys doun
Into the trough, that schal be my desport;
For Jon, in faith, I may be of youre sort,
I is as ille a meller as ere ye."
This mellere smyleth for here nyceté,
And thought, "Al this is doon but for a wyle,
They wenen that no man may hem bigile.
But, by my thrift, yet schal I blere here ye,
For al here sleight and al here philosophie;
The more queynte knakkes that they make,
The more wol I stele whan I take.
In stede of mele, yet wol I yeve hem bren.
The grettest clerkes beth not wisest men,
As whilom to the wolf thus spak the mare;
Of al here art ne counte I nat a tare."

Out at the dore he goth ful pryvyly,
Whan that he saugh his tyme sotyly;
He loketh up and doun, til he hath founde
The clerkes hors, ther as it stood i-bounde
Behynde the mylle, under a levesel;
And to the hors he goth him faire and wel.
He strepeth of the bridel right anoon.
And whan the hors was loos, he gan to goon
Toward the fen there wilde mares renne,
Forth with "wi-he!" thurgh thikke and eek
thurgh thenne.
This meller goth agayn, and no word seyde,
But doth his note, and with the clerkes pleyde,
Til that here corn was fair and wel i-grounde.
And whan the mele was sakked and i-bounde,
This Johan goth out, and fynt his hors away,
And gan to crye, "Harrow and weylaway!
Oure hors is loste! Aleyn, for Goddes banes,
Step on thy feet, cum on, man, al at anes.
Allas! our wardeyn hath his palfray lorn!"
This Aleyn al forgeteth mele and corn,
Al was out of his mynd his housbondrye;
"What, whilke way is he gan?" gan he crye.
The wyf cam lepyng in-ward with a ren,
Sche seyde, "Allas! your hors goth to the fen
With wylde mares, as fast as he may go;
Unthank come on his heed that band him so,
And he that bettir schuld han knyt the reyne!"
"Allas!" quod Johan, "Aleyn, for Cristes
peyne!
Leg doun thi swerd, and I sal myn alswa;
I is ful wight, God wat, as is a ra;
By Goddes hart! he sal nat scape us bathe.
Why nad thou put the capil in the lathe?
Il hail, Aleyn, by God! thou is a fon!"
This sely clerkes speeden hem anoon
Toward the fen, bothe Aleyn and eek Jon.
And when the myller sawh that they were gon,
He half a busshel of the flour hath take,
And bad his wyf go knede it in a cake.
He seyde, "I trowe the clerkes ben aferd!
Yet can a miller make a clerkes berd,
For al his art; ye, lat hem go here waye!

Lo wher they goon! ye, lat the children playe;
They get hym nat so lightly, by my croun!"
This seely clerkes ronnen up and doun,
With "Keep! keep! stand! stand! jossa, ware derere!
Ga wightly thou, and I sal keep him heere."
But schortly, til that it was verray night,
They cowde nat, though they did al here might,
Here capil cacche, it ran away so faste,
Til in a diche they caught him atte laste.
Wery and wete as bestys in the reyn,
Comth sely Johan, and with him comth Aleyn.
"Allas!" quod Johan, "that day that I was born!
Now are we dryve til hething and to scorn.
Oure corn is stole, men woln us foles calle,
Bathe the wardeyn and eek our felaws alle,
And namely the myller, weyloway!"
Thus pleyneth Johan, as he goth by the way
Toward the mylle, and Bayard in his hand.
The myller sittyng by the fyr he fand,
For it was night, and forther mighte they noughte,
But for the love of God they him bisoughte
Of herberwh and of ese, as for her peny.
The myller sayd agayn, "It ther be eny,
Swich as it is, yit schul ye have your part.
Myn hous is streyt, but ye han lerned art;
Ye conne by argumentes make a place
A myl brood of twenty foote of space.
Let se now if this place may suffyse,
Or make it rom with speche, as is your gyse."
"Now, Symond," seyde this Johan, "by seynt Cuthberd?
Ay is thou mery, and that is fair answerd.
I have herd say, men suld take of twa thinges,
Slik as he fynt, or tak slik as he bringes.
But specially I pray the, host ful deere,
Get us som mete and drynk, and mak us cheere,
And we wol paye trewely at the fulle;
With empty hand men may na hawkes tulle.
Lo heer our silver redy for to spende."
This meller into toun his doughter sende

For ale and breed, and rosted hem a goos,
And band her hors, he scholde no more go loos;
And in his owne chambir hem made a bed,
With schetys and with chalouns fair i-spred,
Nat from his owen bed ten foot or twelve.
His doughter had a bed al by hirselve,
Right in the same chambre by and by;
It mighte be no bet, and cause why
Ther was no rommer herberw in the place.
They sowpen, and they speke hem to solace,
And dronken ever strong ale atte beste.
Aboute mydnyght wente they to reste.
Wel hath the myller vernysshed his heed,
Ful pale he was for-dronken, and nat reed;
He yoxeth, and he speketh thurgh the nose,
As he were on the quakke or on the pose.
To bed he goth, and with him goth his wyf,
As eny jay sche light was and jolyf,
So was hire joly whistel wel y-wet;
The cradil at hire beddes feet is set,
To rokken, and to yive the child to souke.
And whan that dronken was al in the crouke,
To bedde wente the doughter right anon;
To bedde goth Aleyn, and also Jon,
Ther nas no more, hem needed no dwale.
This meller hath so wysly bibbed ale,
That as an hors he snortith in his sleep,
Ne of his tayl bihynd took he no keep.
His wyf bar him a burdoun, a ful strong,
Men might her rowtyng heeren a forlong.
The wench routeth eek par companye.
Aleyn the clerk, that herde this melodye,
He pokyde Johan, and seyde, "Slepistow?
Herdistow ever slik a sang er now?
Lo, slik a couplyng is betwix hem alle,
A wilde fyr upon thair bodyes falle!
Wha herkned ever swilk a ferly thing?
Ye, thei sul have the flour of ille endyng!
This lange night ther tydes me na rest.
But yet na fors, al sal be for the best.
For, Johan," sayd he, "as ever mot I thryve,
If that I may, yone wenche sal I swyve.
Som esement hath the lawe schapen us;

For Johan, ther is a lawe that says thus,
That if a man in a point he agreved,
That in another he sal be releeved.
Oure corn is stoln, sothly, it is na nay,
And we have had an ylle fitt to day;
And syn I sal have nan amendement
Agayn my los, I wol have esement.
By Goddes saule! it sal nan other be."
This Johan answerd, "Aleyn, avyse the;
The miller is a perlous man," he sayde,
"And if that he out of his sleep abrayde,
He mighte do us bothe a vilonye."
Aleyn answerd, "I count it nat a flye!"
And up he roos, and by the wenche he crepte.
This wenche lay upright and faste slepte,
Til he so neih was or sche might aspye
That it hadde ben to late for to crye.
And schortly for to seye, they weren at oon.
Now pley, Alein, for I wol speke of Jon.

This Johan lith stille a forlong whyle or two,
And to himself compleyned of his woo.
"Allas!" quod he, "this is a wikked jape;
Now may I say that I am but an ape.
Yet hath my felaw somwhat for his harm;
He hath the myllers doughter in his arm;
He auntred him, and has his needes sped,
And I lye as a draf-sak in my bed;
And when this jape is tald another day,
I sal be held a daf, a cokenay.
Unhardy is unsely, as men saith.
I wol arise, and auntre it, in good faith."
And up he ros, and softely he wente
Unto the cradil, and in his hand it hente,
And bar it softe unto his beddis feet.
Soone after this the wyf hir routyng leet,
And gan awake, and went hir for to pisse,
And cam agayn, and gan hir cradel mysse,
And groped heer and ther, but sche fond noon.
"Allas!" quod sche, "I had almost mysgoon;
I had almost goon to the clerkes bed,
Ey, *benedicite!* than had I foule i-sped!"
And forth sche goth, til sche the cradil fand.
Sche gropith alway forther with hir hand,

And fand the bed, and thoughte nat but good,
Bycause that the cradil by hit stood,
Nat knowyng wher sche was, for it was derk;
But faire and wel sche creep in to the clerk,
And lith ful stille, and wolde han caught a sleep.
Withinne a while Johan the clerk up leep,
And on this goode wyf he leyth on sore;
So mery a fytt ne hadde sche nat ful yore.
He priketh harde and deepe, as he were mad.
This joly lyf han this twey clerkes had,
Til that the thridde cok bygan to synge.
Aleyn wax wery in the dawenynge,
For he hadde swonken al the longe night,
And seyde, " Farwel, Malyn, my sweete wight!
The day is come, I may no lenger byde;
But evermo, wher so I go or ryde,
I am thin owen clerk, so have I seel! "
" Now, deere lemman," quod sche, " go, farwel!
But or thou go, o thing I wol the telle:
Whan that thou wendist hom-ward by the melle,
Right at the entré of the dore byhynde
Thou schalt a cake of half a busshel fynde,
That was i-maked of thyn owen mele,
Which that I hilp myn owen self to stele.
And, goode lemman, God the save and kepe! "
And with that word almost sche gan to weepe.
Aleyn uprist, and thought, " Er that it dawe
I wol go crepen in by my felawe; "
And fand the cradil with his hand anon.
" By God! " thought he, " al wrong I have i-goon;
My heed is toty of my swynk to nyght,
That makes me that I ga nought aright.
I wot wel by the cradel I have mysgo;
Heer lith the myller and his wyf also."
Forth he goth in twenty devel way
Unto the bed, ther as the miller lay.
He wende have crope by his felaw Jon,
And by the myller in he creep anon,
And caught him by the nekke, and soft he spak,
And seyde, " Jon, thou swyneshed, awak,
For Cristes sowle! and here a noble game;
For, by that lord that cleped is seynt Jame,
As I have thries in this schorte night

Swyved the myllers doughter bolt upright,
Whiles thou hast as a coward ben agast."
" Ye, false harlot," quod this mellere, " hast?
A! false traitour, false clerk!" quod he,
" Thou schalt be deed, by Goddes dignité!
Who durste be so bold to disparage
My doughter, that is com of hih lynage? "
And by the throte-bolle he caught Aleyn,
And he hent him dispitiously ageyn,
And on the nose he smot him with his fest.
Doun ran the blody streem upon his brest;
And in the floor with nose and mouth to-broke
They walweden as pigges in a poke;
And up they goon, and doun they goon anon,
Til that the millner stumbled at a ston,
And doun he felle bakward on his wyf,
That wyste nothing of this nyce stryf;
For sche was falle asleepe a litel wight
With Jon the clerk, that waked al the night,
And with the falle right out of slepe sche brayde.
" Help, holy croys of Bromholme!" sche sayde,
" *In manus tuas*, Lord, to the I calle!
Awake, Symond, the feend is in thin halle!
My hert is broken! help! I am but deed!
Ther lythe upon my wombe and on myn heed.
Help, Symkyn! for this false clerkes fighte."
This Johan stert up as fast as ever he mighte,
And graspede by the walles to and fro,
To fynde a staf; and sche sturt up also,
And knewe the estres bet than dede that Jon.
And by the wal sche took a staf anon,
And sawh a litel glymeryng of light;
For at an hool in schon the moone bright,
And by that light she saugh hem bothe two;
But sikirly sche wiste nat who was who,
But as sche saugh a whit thing in hir ye.
And whan sche gan this white thing aspye,
Sche wende the clerk hadde wered a volupeer;
And with a staf sche drough hir neer and neer,
And wend have hit this Aleyn atte fulle,
And smot this meller on the piled sculle,
That doun he goth, and cryeth, " Harrow! I dye!"

This clerkes beeten him wel, and lett hym lye,
And greyth hem wel, and take her hors anon,
And eek here mele, and hoom anon they goon;
And at the millen dore they tok here cake
Of half a buisshel flour ful wel i-bake.
Thus is the prowde miller wel i-bete,
And hath i-lost the gryndyng of the whete,
And payed for the soper every del
Of Aleyn and of Johan, that beten him wel;
His wyf is swyved, and his doughter als.
Lo! such it is a miller to be fals.
And therto this proverbe is seyd ful soth,
He thar nat weene wel that evyl doth.
A gylour schal himself bygiled be.
And God, that sittest in thy magesté,
Save al this compaignie, gret and smale!
Thus have I quyt the miller in his tale.

THE MAN OF LAWES TALE

Oure Hoste saw that in heven the brighte sonne
Of his artificial day the arke had ronne
The fourthe part, of half an hour and more;
And though he were not depe expert in lore,
He wist it was the eightetenthe day
Of April, that is messanger to May;
And saw wel that the shade of every tree
Was in the lengthe the same quantitee
That was the body erecte, that causèd it;
And therfore by the shadwe he took his wit,
That Phebus, which that shoon so fair and brighte,
Degrees was five and fourty clombe on highte;
And for that day, as in that latitude,
It was ten of the clok, he gan conclude;
And sodeynly he put his hors aboute.
"Lordynges," quoth he, "I warne you al the route,
The fourthe party of this day is goon;
Now, for the love of God and of seint Jon,

Lose no tyme, as farforth as ye may,
Lordynges, the tyme passeth, night and day,
And stelith from us, either pryvely slepyng,
Or else thurgh negligence in oure wakyng,
As doth the streem, that torneth never agayn,
Descendyng from the mounteyn into playn.
Wel can Senek and many philosópher
Bywaylen time, more than gold in cofre.
For losse of catel may recovered be,
But losse of tyme it grieveth us, quoth he.
It wil nat come agyn, withoute drede,
Nomore than wil Malkyns maydenhede,
When she hadde lost it in her wantonnesse.
Let us nat waste it thus in ydelnesse.
"Sir Man of Lawe," quoth he, "so have ye blisse,
Telle us a tale anon, as covenant ys.
Ye be submitted thurgh your free assent
To stonden in this case at my judgement,
Acquyt you then, and hold to youre byheste;
Then have ye doon your devour atte leste."
"Hoste," quoth he, "*De par Dieux* I assente,
To breke covenant is nat myn entent.
Byheste is dette, and I wol holde fayn
Al my byhest, I can no better sayn.
For such lawe as a man giveth a wight,
He shuld himselve it usen as by right.
Thus wil oure text: but non the less certeyn
I can right now non other tale seyn,
That Chaucer, though he knows but foolishly
Of metres and of rymyng certeynly,
Hath seyd them in such English as he can
Of olde tyme, as knoweth many man.
And if he have nought sayd them, leeve brother,
In one bok, he hath seyd them in another.
For he hath told of lovers up and doun,
Mo than Ovide made of mencioun
In his Epistelles, that be so olde.
What shuld I tellen them, since they be tolde?
In youthe he writ of Coys and Alcioun,
And since hath he also spoke of everyon
These noble wyfes, and these lovers eek,
Who-so his large volume wile seeke.

Clepèd the seintes legendes of Cupide;
Ther may he see the large woundes wyde
Of Lucresse, and of Babiloun Tysbee;
The sorrow of Dido for the fals Enee;
The grief of Phillis for hir Demephon;
The pleynt of Dyane and of Ermyon,
Of Adrian, and of Ysyphilee;
The barryn yle stondyng in the see;
The drowned Leandere for his fayre Erro;
The teeres of Eleyn, and eek the wo
Of Bryxseyde, and of Leodomia;
The crueltee of the queen Medea,
The litel children hangyng up above,
For thilke Jason, that was so fals of love.
O Ypermystre, Penollope, and Alceste,
Youre wyfhood he comendeth with the beste.
But certeynly no worde writeth he
Of thilke wikked ensample of Canace,
That loved hir owen brother synfully;
On whiche cursed stories I sey fy!
Or elles of Tyro Appoloneus,
How that the cursed kyng Anteochus
Byreft his doughter of hir maydenhede,
As horrible a tale as man may reede,
When he hir threw upon the pavement.
And therfore he of ful avysement
Wolde never wryte in non of his sermouns
Of such unkynde abhominaciouns;
Nor I wil non reherse, if that I may.
But of my tale how shal I do this day?
Me were loth to be lykned douteles
To Muses, that men clepen Pyerides.
(*Methamorphoseos* wot what I mene);
But nontheles I rekke not a bene,
Though I come after him and somwhat lacke,
I speke as prose, and let him rymes make."
And with that word, he with a sobre cheere
Bygan his tale, as ye shal after heere.

O hateful sad condicion of povert,
With thurst, with cold, with hunger so confoundyd,
To asken help it shameth thee in thin hert,

If thou non aske, with neede so art thou woundyd,
That verray neede unwrappeth al thy woundes hyd;
To save thy lif thou most for indigence
Or stele, or begge, or borrow thyn expens.
Thou blamest Crist, and seyst ful bitterly,
He mis-divideth riches temporal;
And thy neyboúr thou enviest synfully;
And seyst thou hast too litel, and he hath al.
Parfay, sayst thou, som tyme he reckon shal,
Whan that his tayl shal burn in fyres red,
For he nought helpeth the needful in his neede.
Herken what is the sentens of the wyse,
Better to dye than suffre indigence;
Thy nexte neybour wol thee soone despyse,
If thou be pore, farwel thy reverence.
Yet of the wyse man take this senténce,
Alle the dayes of pore men be sicke;
Be war therfore ere thou come to that prikke.
If thou be pore, thy brother hateth thee,
And alle thy frendes flee from thee, allas!
O riche marchaunds, ful of welth be ye,
O noble prudent folk as in this case,
Youre bagges be nat fild with double ace,
But with six five, that helpeth on your chaunce;
At Crystemasse wel mery may ye daunce.
Ye seeke land and see for your wynnýnges,
As wyse folk ye knowen alle the estate
Of kingdoms, ye be fadres of tydynges,
Of tales, bothe of pees and of debate.
I were right now of tales desolat,
Hadde not a merchaunt, ded for many a yere,
Me taught a tale, which ye shal after heere.
In Syria dwellèd once a companye
Of chapmen riche, and therto sober and trewe,
That everywhere thay sent their spycerye,
Clothes of gold, and satyn rich of hewe.
Their goodes were so profitable and newe,
That every wight on lond hath covetíse
To buy their ware and sell his merchandise.
Now fel it, that the maystres of that sort
Have mynded them to Rome for to wende,
Were it for merchandise or for disport,

No other message wold they thider sende,
But came themself to Rome, this is the ende;
And in such place as they thought avauntage
For their entent, they tooke her harbourage.
Sojoúrnèd have these marchaunts in the toun
A certeyn tyme, as gave them their plesaúnce.
But so bifell, that the excellent renoun
Of the emperoures doughter dame Constaunce
Reported was, with every circumstaunce,
Unto these Syrrien marchaunts, in such wyse
Fro day to day, as I shal you devyse.
This was the common voys of every man:
"Oure emperour of Rome, God him see!
A doughter hath, that, since the world bygan,
To rekon wel hir goodnes and beautee,
Was never such another as was she.
I prey to God hir save and eek susteene,
And wolde she were of al Europe the queene.
"In her is hy beautee, withoute pryde;
Youthe, withoute wantonnesse or eny folye;
In alle her werkes vertu is hir gyde;
Humblesse hath slayne in hir al tyrrannye;
She is myroúr of alle curtesýe,
Hir herte is very chambre of holynesse,
Hir hand mynístre of generous almesse."
And al this word is soth, as God is trewe.
But now to purpos let us turne agayn:
These marchants have fulfilled their shippes newe,
And when they have this blisful mayde seyn,
Home to Syria be they gon agayn,
And doon their needes, as they have don yore,
And lyven in welth, I can you say no more.
Now fel it, that these marchaunts stoode in grace
Of him that was the Sultan of Syrie.
For when they come fro eny straunge place
He wolde of his benigne curtesye
Make them good chere, and busily espye
Tydynges of sondry kingdoms, for to here
The wondres that they met or far or neer.
Amonges other thinges specially

These marchaunts have him told of dame Constaunce
So gret noblesse, in ernest, seriously,
That this sultán hath caught so gret plesaúnce
To have hir figure in his rémembraúnce,
That al his wil, and al his busy cure,
Was for to love hir, whiles his lyf ma dure.
Paráventure in that same large booke,
Which that is cleped the heven, y-written was
With sterres, whan that he his birthe took,
That he for love shulde have his deth, allas!
For in the sterres, clerere than is glas,
Is wryten, God wot, who-so coude it rede,
The deth of every man, withouten drede.
In sterres many a wynter therbyfore,
Was writ the deth of Ector, Achillés,
Of Pompey, Julius, ere they were i-bore;
The stryf of Thebes, and of Ercules,
Of Samson, Turnus, and of Socrates
The deth; but mennes wittes be so dulle,
That no wight can wel rede it at the fulle.
This sultan for his pryvee counseil sent,
And shortly of this mater for to pace,
He hath to them declarèd his entent,
And told them certeyn, if he hadde not grace
To wed Constance withinne a litel space,
He was but deed, and chargèd them to hie
And shapen for his lyf som remedye.
Dyverse men dyverse thinges seyd,
The argumentes casten up and down;
And many a subtyl resoun forth they leyd;
They speken of magike, and deceptioún;
But finally, as in conclusioún,
They can nought see in that non ávauntáge,
Nor eny other wey, save mariáge.
Then saw they therein such difficultee
By wey of reson, for to speke al playn,
Bycause that ther was such dyversitee
Bitwen their countrees lawes, as they sayn,
They trowe that "no cristen prince wold fayn
Wedden his child under our lawe swete,
That us was taught by Mahoun oure prophéte."
And he answerde: "Rather than I lose

Constance, I wol be cristen douteles;
I must be hers, I may no other choose;
I pray you hold your arguments in pees,
Save ye my lyf, and do your businesse.
Go gette me hir that wil my lyf ensure,
For in this wo I may no longer dure."
What needeth gretter dilatacioún?
I say, by tretys and by embassye,
And by the popes mediacioún,
And al the chirche, and al the chyvalrye,
That to destroye the fals idolatrye,
And in encrease of Cristes lawe deere,
They be acordid, as ye shal after heere,
How that the sultan and his baronage,
And alle his lieges shuld i-crystned be,
And he shal have Constánce in mariáge,
And gold, I know not what in quantitee,
And they have founden súffisánt suretee.
This same acord was sworn on every syde;
Now, fair Constánce, almighty God thee guyde!
Now wolde som men thinken, as I gesse,
That I shulde tellen al the purveyaúnce,
That the emperoúr out of his gret noblesse
Hath made for his doughter dame Constaúnce.
Wel may men know that so gret ordynaúnce
May no man tellen in so litel a clause,
As was arrayèd for so high a cause.
Bisshops be redy with hir for to wende,
Lordes and ladyes, and knightes of renoun,
And other folk ynough, this is the ende.
And notefièd is thurghout the toun,
That every wight with gret devocioún
Shulde preye Crist, that he this mariáge
Accepte wel, and spede this voyáge.
The day is comen of hir départýng,
(I say the woful fatal day is come)
That ther may be no longer tarryyng,
But forthe they be preparèd alle and some.
Constance, that with sorrow is overcome,
Ful pale arose, and dresseth hir to wende.
For wel she saw ther was no other ende.
Allas! what wonder is it though she wepte,
That shal be sent to straunge nacioún,

Fro frendes, that so tenderly hir kepte,
And to be bounde undur subjecciоún
Of one she knew not his condicioún?
Housbondes be al goode, and have been of yore;
That knowen wyfes, I dar saye no more.
"Fader," she seide, "thy wretched child Constaunce,
Thy yonge daughter fostred softely,
And ye, my moder, my soverayn plesaúnce
Over al thing, excepte Crist on hy,
Constaunce your child hir récomaundeth ofte
Unto your grace; for I shal into Syrie,
Nor shal I never see you more with eye.
"Allas! unto the Barbre nacioun
I most anon, since that it is your wille:
But Crist, that dyed for our redempcioún,
So geve me grace his hestes to fulfille,
Me, wrecched womman, though my lyf I spille!
Wommen be born to thraldom and penaúnce,
And to be under mannes governaúnce."
I trowe that Troye whan Pirrus brak the wal,
Or when was burnèd Thebes the citée,
Nor Rome for the harme thurgh Hanibal,
That did the Romayns vanquyssh tymes three,
Had herd such tender wepyng for pitee,
As in the chamber was for hir partynge;
But forth she must, whether she weep or synge.
O firste moving cruel firmament,
With thi diurnal sway that crowdest ay,
And hurlest al from east to occident.
That naturelly wold hold another way;
Thy crowdyng set the heven in such array
At the bygynnyng of this sad voyáge,
That cruel Mars hath slayn this marriáge.
Unfortunat ascendent tortuous,
Of which the lord is helples fallen, allas!
Out of his angle into the derkest hous.
O Mars, O Influence, as in this case;
O feeble moone, unhappy be thi pace,
Thou shynest bright where thou art not receyved,
Wher thou art welcome, from thence thy light is sped.
Imprudent emperour of Rome, allas!

Was ther no phílosóphre in al thy toun?
Is no tyme better than other in such case?
Of voyage is ther no eleccioún,
And that to folk of high condicioún,
Nought when a fate is wel from birthe i-knowe?
Allas! we be too ignorant or slowe.
To shippe is brought this woful faire mayde
Solemnely, with every circumstaúnce.
"Now Jesu Crist so be with you," she sayde.
Ther is nomor, but farwel, fair Constaunce;
She stryveth hir to make good countenaunce.
And forth I lete hire sayle in this manére,
And torne I wil again to my matére.
The moder of the Sultan, ful of vices,
Espyèd hath hir sones playn entent,
How he wol stop his olde sacrifices;
And right anon she for hir counseil sent;
And they be come, to knowe what she ment;
And when assembled was this folke neere,
She sette hir doun, and sayd as ye shal heere.
"Lordes," quoth she, "ye knowen every one,
How that my sone is redy to forget
The holy lawes of our Al Korán,
Given by Goddes messangere Máhométe;
But this avow before grete God I sette,
The lyf shulde rather out of my body stert,
Than Máhométes law go from myn hert.
"What shal us happen from this newe lawe
But thraldom to oure body and penaúnce,
And afterward in helle to be outlaw,
For we denied in our faith credénce?
But, lordes, wil ye maken ássuraúnce,
As I shal say, assentyng to my lore?
And I shal make us safe for evermore."
They sworen and assenten every man
To lyfe with hir and dye, and by hir stande;
And every one in the beste wise he can
To strengthen hir shal help through al the land.
And she an enterprise hath taken in hand,
Which ye shul heere that I shal devyse,
And to them spak she in this wicked wyse:
"We shul first feyne us cristendom to take;
Cold watir shal nat greve us gretely;

And I shal such a fest and revel make,
That, I shal hym, the sultan, satisfie.
For though his wyf be cristned whitely,
She shal have need to wasshe away the red,
Though she a font of watir with hir hadde."
O sultanesse, root of iniquitee
Virago thou Semýram the secoúnde;
O serpent under femininitee,
Lyk to the serpent deep in helle i-bounde;
O feynèd womman, alle that may confounde
Vertu and innocence, thurgh thy malíce,
Is bred in thee as nest of every vice.
O Satan, envyous synce that one day
When thou were chasèd from oure heritage,
Wel knewest thou with wommen the olde way.
Thou madest Eve to bryng us in serváge,
Thou wolt destroy this cristen mariáge.
Thyn instrument so (weylaway the while!)
Makest thou of wommen when thou wilt bygyle.
This sultanesse whom I thus blame and hate
Let privily hir counseil go their way;
What shuld I in this tale make long debate?
She rideth to the sultan on a day,
And seyd him, that she wold her faith deny,
And cristendom of priestes hands receyve,
Repentyng hir of Máhométs bileeve;
Bysechyng him to do hir that honoúr,
That she most have the cristen men to feste;
"To plesen them I wil do my laboúr."
The sultan seith, "I wil do at your heste,"
And knelyng, thanketh hir for that requeste;
So glad he was, he knew not what to seye.
She kyst hir sone, and hom she goth hir weye.
Arryvèd be the cristen folke to land
In Syrie, with a gret solemne route,
And hastily this sultan sent commaund,
First to his moder, and al the realm aboute,
And seyd, his wyf was comen out of doute,
And preyeth hir for to ride to mete the queene,
The honour of his realm for to susteene.
Gret was the press, and riche was the array
Of Syrriens and Romayns far and neere.
The moder of the sultan riche and gay

Receyvèd hir with al so glad a cheere,
As eny moder might hir doughter deere;
And to the nexte citee ther bysyde
A softe pace solemnely thay ryde.
Nought trow I the triúmphe of Julius,
Of which that Lukan maketh moche bost,
Was royaller or more curious,
Than was the assemblee of this blisful host.
But yet this scorpioun, this wikked ghost,
The sultaness, for al hir flaterynge,
Thought under this ful mortally to stynge.
The sultan comth himself sone after this
So royally, that wonder is to telle;
And welcometh hir with alle joy and blys.
And thus with mirth and joy I let them dwelle.
The fruyt of this matér is that I telle.
Whan tyme com, men thought it for the best
That revel stynt, and men go to there rest.
The tyme com, the olde sultanesse
Ordeynèd hath this fest of which I tolde;
And to the feste folk themselven addresse
In generale, bothe yong and olde.
Ther men may fest and royaltee byholde,
And deyntees mo than I can wel devyse,
But al too deere they bought it ere they ryse.
O sodeyn wo! that ever art súccessoúr
To worldly blis, sprinkled with bitternesse,
Ende of oure joye, of oure worldly laboúr;
Wo dwelleth at the tayle of oure gladnésse.
Herken this counseil for thy stedfastnesse;
Upon thy glade dayes have in thi mynde
The unseene wo that cometh ay bihynde.
For shortly for to tellen at one word,
The sultan and the cristen every one
Be al y-slayn and stikèd at the board,
Save it were dame Constaúnce hir allone.
This olde sultanesse, this cursed crone,
Hath with hir frendes doon this cursed dede,
For she hirself wold al the contree lede.
Nor ther was Syrrien noon that was converted,
That of the counseil of the sultan wot,
Who was not al y-slayn ere he up sterted
And Constaunce have they take anon foot-hot,

And in a shippe, stereles, God wot,
They have hir set, and bad hir lerne to sayle
Out of Surry agein-ward to Ytaile.
A certein tresour that she thider ladde,
And, soth to sayn, vitaile gret plentee,
They have hir geven, and clothes eek she hadde,
And forth she sayleth in the salte see.
O my Constaunce, ful of benignitee,
O emperoures yonge doughter deere,
He that is Lord of fortun be thi steere!
She crosseth hir, and with ful piteous voys
Unto the croys of Crist then seyde she:
"O clear, O welful altar, holy cross,
Red with the lambes blood, ful of pitee,
That washed the world from old iniquitee,
Me fro the feend and fro his clawes keepe,
That I be not y-drownèd in the deepe.
"Victorious tree, proteccioun of the trewe,
That only were worthy for to bere
That Kyng of Heven, with his woundes newe,
The white Lambe, that hurt was with a spere;
Banisshyng feendes out of him and her,
On which thy lymes feithfully extenden,
Me kepe, and gif me might my lyf to menden."
Yeres and dayes floted this créatúre
Thurghout the see of Grece, into the strayte
Of Marrok, as it was hir áventúre.
O many a sory mele may she eate,
And for hir deth ful ofte may she wayte,
Ere that the wilde wave wil hir dryve
Unto the place wher she shal arryve.
Men mighten asken, why she was nought slayn?
And at the fest who might hir body save?
And I answere to that demaunde agayn,
Who savèd Daniel in the horrible cave,
When every wight, save he, mayster or knave,
Was with the lioun torn ere he upsterte?
No wight but God, that he bar in his herte.
God wolde shewe his wondurful mirácle
In hir, for we shulde see his mighty werkes;
Crist, which that is to every harm treácle,
By certeyne menes ofte, as knowen clerkes,

Doth things for certeyn ende, that ful derk is
To mannes witt, that for our ignoraunce
We can nought knowe his prudent providence.
Now since she was not at the fest i-slawe,
Who kepte hir from the drownyng in the see?
Who kepte Jonah in the fishes mawe,
Til he was spouted up at Ninivé?
Wel may men knowe, it was no wight but He
That kepte the pepul Hebrew fro their drownyng,
With drye feet thurghout the see passýng.
Who bad the foure spirits of tempést,
That power have to annoyen land and see,
Bothe north and south, and also west and est,
Anoyen neyther londe, see, nor tree?
Soothly the cómaunder of that was He
That from the tempest ay this womman kepte,
As wel when she awok as when she slepte.
Wher mighte mete and drinke this womman have?
Three yer and more, how lasteth hir vitaille?
Who fedde the Egipcien Marie in the cave,
Or in desért? no wight but Crist *saunz faile*.
Fyf thousand folk, it was as gret mervaile
With loves fyf and fisshes tuo to feede;
God sent her plentee at her grete neede.
She dryveth forth into oure ocean
Thurghout oure wilde see, til atte laste
Under an holde, that I cannot namen,
Far in Northumberland, the wave hir caste,
And in the sand the ship stykède so faste,
That thence it wold not flote al in a tyde;
The wille of Crist was that she shold abyde.
The constabil of the castel doun is fare
To see this wrak, and al the ship he sought,
And found this wery womman ful of care;
He found also the tresour that she brought:
In hir langáge mercy she bisought,
The lif out of her body to let go,
Hir to delyver of al her grete wo.
A maner Latyn córupt was hir speche,
But nontheles they did her understonde.
The constabil, whan he wold no longer seek,
This woful womman broughte he to the londe.

She kneleth doun, and thanketh Goddes hand,
But what she was, she wolde no man seye
For foul or faire, thou she sholde deye.
  She was, she seyde, so masèd in the see,
That she forgat hir mynde, by hire trothe.
The constable had of hir so gret pitée,
And eek his wyf, they wepéden for ruth;
She was so diligent withouten slothe
To serve and plesen ever in that place,
That alle hir love that loken on hir face.
  The constable and dame Hermegyld his wyf,
To telle you playne, pagenes bothe were;
But Hermegyld loved Constance as hir lyf:
And Constance hath so longe harbourèd there
In orisouns, with many a bitter teere,
Til Jesu hath converted thurgh his grace
Dame Hermegyld, constáblesse of the place.
  In al the lond no cristen men were found;
Al cristen men be fled from that contré
Thurgh pagens, that had conquered al around
The places of the north by land and see.
To Wales fled the cristianitee
Of olde Britouns, dwellyng in this yle;
Ther was their refuge for the mene while.
  But yit were cristens never so exiled,
That ther were none who in there pryvitee
Honoúrede Crist, and hethen folk bygiled;
And ny the castel such ther dwellide three.
That one of them was blynd, and might nat see,
Save it were with the eyen of his mynde,
With which men seen after that they be blynde.
  Bright was the sonne, as in that someres day,
For which the constable and his wif also
And Constaunce hadde take the righte way
Toward the see, a forlong wey or two,
To pleyen, and to romen to and fro;
And in that walk this blynde man they mette,
Croked and olde, with eyen close y-sette.
  "In name of Crist," cryède this old Britoun,
"Dame Hermegyld, gif me my sight ageyn!"
This lady wax affrayèd of the sound,
Lest that hir houseband, shortly for to sayn,
Wold hir for Jesu Cristes love have slayn,

Til Constaunce made hir bold, and bad her werk
The wil of Crist, as doughter of holy chirche.
The constable wax abasshèd of that sight,
And sayde, "What amounteth al this fare?"
Constaunce answérd, "Sir, it is Cristes might,
That helpeth folk out of the feendes snare."
And so ferforth she gan our faith declare,
That she the constable, ere that it was eve
Converted, and on Crist made him bileve.
This constable was not lord of this same place
Of which I speke, where he Constance found,
But kept it strongly many a wynter space
Under Alla, kyng of Northumberlond,
That was ful wys, and worthy of his hond,
Agein the Scottes, as men may wel heere.
But tourne agein I wil to my matére.
Satan, that ever us wayteth to begile,
Sawe of Constaunce al hir perfecciоún.
And cast anon how he mighte her revile;
And made a yong knight, that dwelt in the toun,
Love hir so hot of foul affecciоún,
That verrayly he thought he shulde dye,
Save he might once doon her vilonye.
He vowith hir, but it avayleth nought,
She wolde do no synne by no weye;
And for despyt, he compassed in his thought
To maken hir a shamful deth to deye.
He wayteth whan the constable was aweye,
And pryvyly upon a nyght he crepte
In Hermyngyldes chambre whil she slepte.
Wery, al tirèd by her orisoun,
Slepeth Constaunce, and Hermyngyld also.
This knight, thurgh Satanas temptaciоún,
Al softely is to the bed y-go,
And kutte the throte of Hermegild a-two,
And leyde the bloody knyf by dame Constaunce,
And went his way, ther God geve him meschaunce.
Sone after comth this constable hom agayn,
And eek Alla, that was kyng of that lond,
And say his wyf dispiteously i-slayn,
For which ful oft he wept and wrong his hond;
And in the bed the blody knyf he fond

By Dame Constaunce: allas! what might she say?
For verray wo hir witt was al away.
To king Alla was told al this meschaunce,
And eek the tyme, and wher, and eek the wyse
That in a ship was founden this Constaunce,
As here bifore ye have herd me devyse.
The kinges hert in pité gan advyse,
Whan he saw so benigne a créatúre
Falle in suspicioun and mysáventúre.
For as the lomb toward his deth is brought,
So stant this innocent bifore the kyng.
This false knight, that hath this tresoun wrought,
Swereth aloude that she hath don this thing;
But nevertheles ther was gret murmuring
Among the people, and never one can gesse
That she hadde doon so gret a wikkednesse.
For they have seen hir ever so vertuous,
And lovyng Hermegyld right as hir lyf;
Of this bar witnesse al men in that hous,
Save he that slewe Hermegyld with his knyf.
This gentil kyng hath caught a gret motyf
Of this witnesse, and thought he wold enquere
Deppere in this to find the trouthe there.
Allas! Constaunce, thou hast no champioún,
And fighte canst thou nat, so welaway!
But He that once for oure redempcioun
Bounde Sathan, that yit lieth where he lay,
So be thy stronge champioun this day;
For save that Crist thee a mirácle sende,
Withoute doute thy lyf shal have hys ende.
She set hir doun on knees, and than she sayde
" Immortal God, that savedest Susanne
From false blame; and thou, mercyful mayde,
Mary I mene, doughter of seint Anne,
Bifore whos child the aungels syng Osanne;
If I be gultles of this felonye,
My socour be, for else I moste dye!"
Have ye not seen som tyme a pale face,
Among a press, of him that hath been lad
Toward his deth, wher him gayneth no grace,
And such a colour in his face hath had,
Men mighte knowe his face who was bestead,

Amonges alle the faces in that route;
So stant Constance, and loketh hir about.
O queenes lyvyng in prosperitee,
Duchesses, and ye ladies everyone,
Have som pitee on hir adversitee;
An emperoures doughter stond allone;
She hath no wight to whom to make hir moan;
O blod royal, that stondest in this drede,
Far be thy frendes at thy grete neede!
This Alla kyng hath such compassioun,
As gentil hert is filled ful of pitee,
That from his eyen ran the water doun.
"Now hastily do fetch a book," quoth he;
"And if this knight wil swere how that she
This womman slew, yet wil we us avyse,
One that we wille shal be oure justise."
A Britoun book, i-writ with Evaungiles,
Was brought, and on this book he swor anon
She gulty was; and in the mene whiles
An hond him smot upon the nekke bone,
That doun he fel anon right as a stoon;
And bothe his eyen brast out of his face,
In sight of every body in that place.
A vois was herd, in general audience,
And seide, "Thou hast slaundred gilteles
The doughter of holy chirche in this presence;
Thus hast thou doon, and yit I helde my pees"
Of this mervaile agast was al the press,
As masèd folk they stooden everyone
For drede of vengeance, save Constaúnce allone.
Gret was the drede and eek the répentaúnace
Of them that hadden wrong suspecciоún
Upon the simple innocent Constaúnce;
And for this miracle, in conclusioún,
And by Constaunces mediacioún,
The kyng, and many other in the place,
Converted was, thankèd be Cristes grace!
This false knight was slayn for his untruthe
By judgement of Alla hastyly;
And yit Constaunce hath of his deth gret ruth.
And after this Jesus of his mercy
Made Alla wedde ful solemnely

This holy mayde, that is bright and shene,
And thus hath Crist i-made Constance a queene.
But who was woful, if I shal not lye,
Of this weddyng but Donegild and no mo,
The kynges moder, ful of tyrannye?
Hir thought hir cursed herte brast a-two;
She wolde nat hir sone had wedded so;
She thoughte despyteous, that he shulde wedde
So straunge a créatúre unto his bedde.
I list not of the straw or of the chaffe
Make so long a tale, as of the corn.
What shuld I telle the triumphe that men have
In this mariáge, or which cours goth biforn,
Who bloweth in a trompe or in an horn?
The fruyt of every tale is for to seye;
They ete and drynk, and daunce and synge and pleye.
They gon to bed, as it was juste and right;
For though that wyfes be ful holy thinges,
They moste take in pacience a-night
Such maner necessaries as be plesynges
To folk that have i-wedded them with rynges,
And half their holynesse ley aside
As for the tyme, there may no other betyde.
On hire he gat a manne child anon,
And to a bisshope, and to his constable eek,
He lefte his wyf to kepe, whan he is gon
To Scotland-ward, his fomen for to seeke.
Now faire Constaunce, that is so humble and meeke,
So long is goon with childe til that stille
She held hir chambre, abidyng Goddes wille.
The tyme is come, a manne childe she bere;
Mauricius atte font-stone men him calle.
This constabil bringeth forth a messager,
And wrot unto his kyng that cleped was Alle,
How that this blisful tydyng is bifalle,
And other thinges spedful for to seye.
He taketh the lettre, and forth he goth his weye.
This messanger, to do his ávauntáge,
Unto the kynges moder he taketh his weye,
And hire saluteth fair in his langáge.
" Madame," quoth he, " ye may be glad and gaye,

And thanke God an hundred tymes a daye;
My lady queen hath child, withouten doute
To joye and blis of al the realm aboute.
" Lo heer the lettres sealèd of this thing,
That I must bere with al the hast I may;
If ye wil ought unto youre sone the kyng,
I am youre servaunt bothe night and day."
Donegyld answerde, " As now this tyme, nay;
But here al nyght I wil thou take thy rest,
To morrow I wil say thee what is best."
This messanger drank depe of ale and wyn,
And stolen were his lettres privily
Out of his box, whil he sleep as a swyn;
And countrefeeted they were subtily;
Another she him wrote ful synfully,
Unto the kyng direct of this matére
Fro his constable, as ye shal after heere.
The lettre spak, the queen delyvered was
Of so orryble and feendly créatúre,
That in the castel non so hardy was
That eny while dorste therin endure;
The moder was an elf by áventúre
Chaungèd by charmes or by sorcerie,
And every man hatith hir companye.
Wo was this kyng whan he this letter had seen,
But to no wight he told his sorrow sore,
But of his owen hand he wrot agayn:
" Welcome the hand of Crist for evermore
To me, that am now lernèd in his lore;
Lord, welcome by thy wil and thy pleasaunce!
My wil I putte al in thyn ordinaunce.
" Kepe this child, al be it foul or fair,
And eek my wyf, unto myn hom comyng;
Crist whan he wil may sende me an heir
More ágreáble than this to my likyng."
This lettre he seleth, pryvyly wepyng,
Which to the messager he took ful sone,
And forth he goth, ther is no more to done.
O messager, fulfild of dronkenesse,
Strong is thy breth, thy limbes faltern ay,
And thou bywreyest alle secretness;
Thy mynde is lost, thou janglest as a jay;
Thy face is tornèd al in a newe array;

Wher drunkennesse regneth in eny route,
Ther is no counseil hid, withoute doute.
O Donegyld, I have no English digne
Unto thy malice and thy tyrannye;
And therfor to the feend I thee resigne,
Let him endyten of thi treccherie.
Fy, vilain, fy!—o nay, by God, I lye;
Fy! feendly spirit, for I dar wel telle,
Though thou here walke, thy spirit is in helle.
This messager comth fro the kyng agayn,
And at the kinges modres court he light,
And she was of this messenger ful fayn,
And pleseth him in al that ever she might.
He drank, and rounded out his gurdel aright;
He slepeth, and he snoreth in this wyse
Al nyght, unto the sonne gan arise.
Eft were his lettres stolen every one,
And countrefeted lettres in this wise:
"The kyng comaundeth his constable anon,
On peyne of hangyng and of hy justice,
That he shulde suffre in no maner wyse
Constaunce within his realm for to abyde
Thre dayes, and a quarter of a tyde;
But in the same ship as he hir found,
Hir and hir yonge sone, and al hir gear,
He shulde putte, and push hir from the londe,
And charge hir that she never eft come there."
O my Constaunce, wel may thy spirit have fere,
And, slepyng, in thy dream be in penaúnce,
Whan Donegyld wrot al this ordynaunce.
This messanger a-morrow, whan he awok,
Unto the castel held the nexte way;
And to the constable he the lettre took;
And whan that he the piteous lettre say,
Ful ofte he seyd allas and welaway;
"Lord Crist," quoth he, "how may this world endure?
So ful of synne is many a créatúre!
O mighty God, if that it be thy wille,
Since thou art rightful judge, how may this be
That thou wolt suffre innocents to spille,
And wikked folk regne in prosperité?
O good Constance, allas; so wo is me,

That I must be thy tórmentour, or deye
On shamful deth, ther is no other weye."
Wepen bothe yong and olde in al that place,
Whan that the kyng this corsed lettre sent;
And Constance with a dedly pale face
The fourthe day toward hir ship she went.
But nevertheles she taketh in good entent
The wil of Crist, and knelyng on the sand
She sayde, "Lord, ay welcome be thy hand!
"He that me kepte fro the false blame,
Whil I was on the lond amonges you,
He can me kepe from harm and eek fro shame
In the salte see, although I see nat how;
As strong as ever he was, he is right now,
In him trust I, and in his moder deere,
That is to me my sayl and eek my steere."
Hir litel child lay wepyng in hir arm,
And knelyng piteously to him she sayde:
"Pees, litle son, I wil do thee no harm."
With that hir kerchef drew she off hir hed,
And over his litel eyen she it layde,
And in hir arm she lullith it wel faste,
And unto heven hir eyen up she caste.
"Moder," quoth she, "and madye bright,
Marie,
Soth is, that thurgh a wommannes evil intent
Mankynde was lost and damnèd ay to dye,
For which thy child was on a cross to-rent;
Thy blisful eyen saw al this torment;
Then is ther no comparisoun bitwene
Thy wo, and any wo man may sustene.
"Thow saw thy child i-slain byfor thyn eyen,
And yet now lyveth my litel child, parfay;
Now, lady bright, to whom alle wofulle cryen,
Thou glory of wommanhod, thou faire may,
Thou heven of refuge, brighte sterre of day,
Pity my child, that of thy gentilnesse
Hast pity on every synful in distresse.
"O litel child, alas! what is thi gilt,
That never wroughtest synne as yet, pardé?
Why wil thyn harde fader have thee spilt?
O mercy, deere constable," seyde she,
"And let my litel child here dwelle with thee,

And if thou darst not saven him for blame,
So kys him once but in his fadres name."
Therwith she lokede bak-ward to the londe,
And seyde, " Farwel, housbond ruthèles! "
And up she rist, and walketh doun the stronde
Toward the ship, hir folweth al the press;
And ever she preyeth hir child to hold his pees,
And took hir leve, and with an holy entent
She crosseth hir, and to the ship she wente.
Vytaillèd was the ship, it is no drede,
Abundauntly for her a ful longe space;
And other necessaries that shulde nede
She had ynowgh, praysèd be Cristes grace;
Fair wether God give hir in this yvel case,
And bryng hir hom, I can no bettre say,
But in the see she dryveth forth hir way.
Alla the kyng cometh hom soon after this
Unto the castel, of the which I tolde,
And asketh wher his wyf and his child ys.
The constable gan aboute his herte grow colde,
And playnly al the maner he him tolde
As ye have herd, I can telle it no better,
And shewede the kynges seal and his letter;
And seyde, " Lord, as ye comaunded me
On peyne of deth, so have I done certayn."
This messager tormented was, til he
Moste rémembér and telle it plat and playn,
Fro nyght to night in what place he had layn
And thus by witt and subtil énquerýng,
Ymagined was by whom this gan to spryng.
The hand was knowen that the lettre wrot,
And al the venom of this cursed dede;
But in what wyse, certeyn I knowe not.
The effect is this, that Alla, out of drede,
His moder slew, as men may pleynly reed,
For that she traytour was to hir ligeaunce.
Thus endeth olde Donegild with meschaunce.
The sorwe that this Alla night and day
Makth for his wyf and for his child also,
Ther is no tonge that it telle may.
But now I wil unto Constaunce go,
That floteth in the see in peyne and wo

Fyve yeer and more, as pleasèd Cristes hand,
Ere that hir ship approchèd unto lande.
Under an hethen castel atte last,
Of which the name in my text nought I fynde,
Constaunce and eek hir child the see upcast.
Almighty God, that saveth al mankynde,
Have on Constaunce and on hir child som mynde!
That fallen is in hethen hond eftsone,
In poynt to dye, as I shal telle you soone.
Doun fro the castel comth many a wight,
To gazen on this ship, and on Constaunce;
But shortly fro the castel on a night,
The lordes styward, God give him meschance!
A theef that hadde denièd oure credence,
Com into ship alone, and syd he sholde
Hir lover be, whethir she wold or nolde.
To stryve this wrecched womman had bigunne,
Her childe crieth and she pyteously;
But blisful Mary help hir right anon,
For with her strogelynge wel and mightily
The theef fel over-boord al sodeinly,
And in the see he drownèd for vengeaunce,
And thus hath Crist unhurt kept fair Constaunce.
O foule luste, O luxurie, lo thin ende!
Nought only that thou spoilest mannes mynde,
But verrayly thou wolt his body rend.
The ende of al thy werk, and lustes blynde,
Is cómpleynyng; how many may men fynde,
That nought for sin som tyme, but for the entent
To doon his synne, be eyther slayn or spent!
How may this weyke womman have the strengthe
Hir to defende against the renegat?
O Golias, unmesurable of lengthe,
How mighte David bringe thee to thy fate?
So yong, and of armure so desolate,
How dorst he loke upon thy dredful face?
Wel may men seyn, it was but Goddes grace.
Who gaf Judith corâge or hardynesse
To sley him Olofernes in his tent,
And to delyveren out of wretchedness
The peple of God? I say in this entent,
That right as God spiryte and vigor sent

To them, and savèd them out of meschaunce,
So sent he might and vigor to Constaunce.
Forth goth hir ship thurghout the narrow mouth
Of Jubalter and Septé, dryvyng alway,
Som tyme west, and som tyme north and south,
And som tyne est, ful many a wery day;
Til Cristes moder, blessèd be she ay!
Hath shapen thurgh hir endeles goodnesse
To make an ende of al hir hevynesse.
Now let us stynt of Constaunce but a throwe,
And speke we of the Romayn emperour,
That out of Syrrye hath by lettres knowe
The slaughter of cristen folk, and déshonoúr
Doon to his doughter by a fals traytour,
I mene the cursed and wikked sultanesse,
That at the fest let sley bothe more and lesse.
For which this emperour hath sent anon
His senatour, with royal ordynaunce,
And other lordes, God wot, many a one,
On Syrriens to taken high vengeaunce.
They brenne, slay, and bringen them to meschaunce
Ful many a day; but shortly this is the ende,
Hom-ward to Rome they shapen them to wende.
This senatour repayreth with victorie
To Rome-ward, saylyng ful royally,
And mette the ship dryvyng, as seith the story,
In which Constance sitteth ful piteously.
But nothing knew he what she was or why
She was in such aray, she wold not seye
Of her estate, although she sholde deye.
He bryngeth hir to Rome, and to his wyf
He gaf hir, and hir yonge sone also;
And with the senatour ladde she hir lyf.
Thus can our lady bryngen out of wo
Woful Constaunce and many another mo;
And longe tyme dwelled she in that place,
In holy werkes, as ever was hir grace.
The senatoures wif hir aunte was,
But for al that she knew hir never more:
I wil no lenger taryen in this case,
But to kyng Alla, which I spak of yore,
That for his wyf wepeth and sigheth sore,

I will retorne, and let I wil Constaunce
Under the senatoures governaunce.
Kyng Alla, which that had his moder slayn,
Upon a day fel in such répentaúnce,
That, if I shortly telle shal and playn,
To Rome he cometh to receyven his penaunce,
To putte him in the popes ordynaunce
In high and lowe, and Jesu Crist bysoughte,
Forgive his wikked werkes that he wroughte,
The fame anon thurgh Rome toun is born,
How Alla kyng shal come in pilgrymáge,
By messengers that wenten him biforn,
For which the senatour, as was usage,
Rode him to meet, and many of his lynage,
As wel to shewen his magnificence,
As to do eny kyng a reverence.
Gret cheere doth this noble senatour
Unto kyng Alla, and he to him also;
Ech one of them doth the other gret honoúr,
And so bifel, that in a day or two
This senatour is to kyng Alla go
To fest, and shortly if I shal not lye,
Constances sone went in his companye.
Som men wolde seyn at réquest of Custaunce
This senatour hath lad this child to feste;
I may not tellen every circumstaunce,
Be as be may, ther was he atte leste;
But soth it is, right at his modres heste,
Before them alle, duryng the metes space,
The child stood lokyng in the kynges face.
This Alla kyng hath of this child gret wonder,
And to the senatour he seyd anon,
"Whos is that faire child that stondeth yonder?"
"I knowe not," quoth he, "ne, by seynt Jon!
A moder he hath, but fader hath he non,
That I wot of:" and then in wordes few
He told what of the mother and child he knew.
"But God wot," quoth this senatour also,
"So vertuous a lyver in my lyf
Have I seen never, such as she, nor know
Of worldly womman, mayden, or of wyf;
I dar wel say she hadde rather a knyf
Thurghout hir brest, than lose her chastitee,

Ther is no man can bryng hir to vilonye."
Now was this child as like unto Constaunce
As possible is a créatúre to be.
This Alla hath the face in rémembraúnce
Of dame Constaunce, and thereon muséd he,
If that the childes moder were she
That is his wyf; and pryvely he sighed,
And sped him fro the table when he mighte.
"Parfay!" thought he, "fantóm is in myn heed;
I ought to deme, of rightful judgement,
That in the salte see my wyf is ded."
And after-ward he made this argument:
"What wot I, whether Crist hath hider sent
My wyf by see, as wel as he hir sent
To my contree, when in the see she wente?"
And after noon home with the senatour
Goth Alla, for to see this wondrous chaunce.
This senatour doth Alla gret honoúr,
And hastely he sent after Constaunce.
But truste wel, hir wish was not to daunce,
When that she wiste wherfor was that commaund,
And scarce upon hir feet she mighte stonde.
When Alla saw his wyf, fayre he hir grette,
And wepte, that it pity was to see;
For at the firste look he on hir sette
He knew wel verrely that it was she.
And for sorrow, as domb she stant as a tree:
So was her herte shutte in her distresse,
Whan she remembred his unkyndenesse.
Twice she swownèd in his owen sight;
He wept and him excuseth piteously;
"Now God," quoth he, "and alle his saintes brighte
So wisly on my soule have mercy,
That of youre harm as gilteles am I
As is Maurice my sone, so lyk youre face,
And else the feend me fetche out of this place."
Long was the sobbyng and the bitter peyne,
Ere that their woful herte mighte cesse;
Gret was the pitee for to here them pleyne,
Thurgh whiche playntes gan their wo encrease.

I pray you alle my labour to release,
I may not telle there wo unto the morrow,
I am so wery for to speke of the sorrow.
But fynally, when that the soth is wist,
That Alla gilteles was of hir wo,
I trowe an hundred tymes they be kist,
And such a blys is ther bitwix them tuo,
That, save the joye that lasteth ever mo,
Ther is noon lyk, that eny créatúre
Hath seyn or shal, whil that the world may dure.
Then prayèd she hir housbond meekely
In the relees of hir long pyteous pyne,
That he wold preye hir fader specially,
That of his majestee he wold enclyne
To vouchesafe som tyme with him to dyne.
She preyeth him eek, he shulde by no weye
Unto hir fader no word of hir seye.
Som men wold seyen, that hir child Maurice
Doth his messáge unto the emperoúr;
But, as I gesse, Alla was nat so nyce,
To him that is so soverayn of honoúr,
As he that is of Cristes folk the flour,
Sent eny child; but it is best to deeme
He went himsilf, and so it may wel seme.
This emperour hath graunted gentilly
To come to dyner, as he him bysoughte;
And as I rede, he lokèd busily
Upon the child, and on his doughter thoughte.
Alla goth to his inn and as he oughte
Arrayèd for this fest in every wyse,
As farforth as his connyng may suffise.
The morrow cam, and Alla gan him dresse,
And eek his wyf, the emperour for to meete;
And forth they ryde in joye and in gladnesse,
And when she saw hir fader in the streete,
She light adoun and falleth him to feete.
"Fader," quoth she, "your yonge child Constance
Is now ful clene out of your rémembraúnce.
"I am your doughter Custaunce," then quoth she,
"That whilom ye have sent unto Syrrye;
It am I, fader, that in the salte see

Was put allone, and damnèd for to dye.
Now, goode fader, mercy I you crye,
Send me no more unto no hethenesse,
But thanke my lord here of his kyndenesse."
Who can the pyteous joye tellen al
Bitwixt them three, since they be thus i-mette?
But of my tale make an ende I shal;
The day goth fast, I wil no lenger lette.
These glade folk to dyner they be sette;
In joye and blys at mete I let them dwelle,
A thousand fold happier, than I can telle.
This child Maurice was after emperour
Made by the pope, and lyvèd cristenly,
To Cristes chirche did he gret honoúr.
But I let al his story passen by,
Of Constaunce is my tale specially;
In olde Romayn stories men may fynde
Maurices lyf, I bere it nought in mynde.
This kyng Alla when that he chose his day,
With his Constaunce, his holy wyf so swete,
To Engelond they com the righte way,
Wher as they lyve in joye and in quyéte.
But litel whil it last; joye is ful fleet;
Joy of this world for tyme wil not abyde,
Fro day to night it chaungeth as the tyde.
Who lyvèd ever in such delyt a day,
That him nor movèd eyther his conscience,
Or ire, or talent, or som maner affray,
Envy, or pride, or passioun, or offence?
I say but for this ende this senténce,
That litel whil in joye or in plesaunce
Lasteth the blis of Alla with Constaunce.
For deth, that takth of high and low his rente,
When passèd was a yeere, even as I gesse,
Out of this worlde kyng Alla he sent,
For whom Constaunce hath ful gret hevynesse.
Now let us pray that God his soule blesse!
And dame Constaunce, fynally to say,
Toward the toun of Rome goth hir way.
To Rome is come this nobil créatúre,
And found hir freendes ther bothe whole and sound;
Now is she skapèd al hir áventúre.

And whanne she her fader had i-founde,
Doun on hir knees falleth she to grounde,
Wepyng for tendirnes in herte gay
She prayed God an hundred times a daye.
In vertu and in holy almes-dede
They lyven alle, and never asondre wende;
Til deth departe them, this lyf they lede.
And far now wel, my tale is at an ende.
Now Jesu Crist, that of his might may sende
Joy after wo, governe us in his grace,
And keep us alle that be in this place.

THE SCHIPMANNES TALE

A Marchaunt whilom dwelled at Seint Denys,
That riche was, for which men hild him wys.
A wyf he had of excellent beauté,
And companable, and reverent was sche;
Which is a thing that causeth more despence,
Than worth is al the cher and reverence
That men doon hem at festes or at daunces.
Such salutaciouns and continaunces
Passeth, as doth the schadow on a wal;
But wo is him that paye moot for al.
The sely housbond algat moste paye,
He most us clothe in ful good arraye
Al for his oughne worschip richely;
In which array we daunce jolily.
And if that he may not, paraventure,
Or elles wil not such dispens endure,
But thynketh it is wasted and i-lost,
Than moot another paye for oure cost,
Or lene us gold, and that is perilous.
This worthy marchaunt huld a noble hous,
For which he hadde alday gret repair
For his largesce, and for his wyf was fair.
What wonder is? but herkneth to my tale.
Amonges al these gestes gret and smale,
Ther was a monk, a fair man and a bold,
I trowe, thritty wynter he was old,

That ever in oon was drawyng to that place.
This yonge monk, that was so fair of face,
Aqueynted was so with the goode man,
Sithen that her firste knowleche bygan,
That in his hous as familier was he
As it possibil is a frend to be.
And for as mochil as this goode man
And eek this monk, of which that I bygan,
Were bothe tuo i-born in oon village,
The monk him claymeth, as for cosynage;
And he ayein him saith nat oones nay,
But was as glad therof, as foul of day,
For to his hert it was a gret plesaunce.
Thus ben thay knyt with eterne alliaunce,
And ilk of hem gan other to assure
Of brotherhed, whil that her lif may dure.
Fre was daun Johan, and manly of despence
As in that hous, and ful of diligence
To do plesaunce, and also gret costage;
He nought foryat to yeve the leste page
In al that hous; but, after her degré,
He yaf the lord, and siththen his meyné,
Whan that he com, som maner honest thing;
For which thay were as glad of his comyng
As foul is fayn, whan that the sonne upriseth.
No mor of this as now, for it suffiseth.

But so bifel, this marchaunt on a day·
Schop him to make redy his array
Toward the toun of Bruges for to fare,
To byen ther a porcioun of ware;
For which he hath to Paris sent anoon
A messanger, and prayed hath dan Johan
That he schulde come to Seint Denys, and playe
With him, and with his wyf, a day or twaye,
Er he to Brigges went, in alle wise.
This nobil monk, of which I yow devyse,
Hath of his abbot, as him list, licence,
(Bycause he was a man of heih prudence,
And eek an officer) out for to ryde,
To se her graunges and her bernes wyde;
And unto Seint Denys he cometh anoon.
Who was so welcome as my lord dan Johan,
Oure deere cosyn, ful of curtesie?

With him brought he a jubbe of malvesie,
And eek another ful of wyn vernage,
And volantyn, as ay was his usage;
And thus I lete hem ete, and drynk, and playe,
This marchaunt and this monk, a day or twaye.
The thridde day this marchaund up he riseth,
And on his needes sadly him avyseth;
And up into his countour hous goth he,
To rekyn with him-self, as wel may be,
Of thilke yer, how that it with him stood,
And how that he dispended had his good,
And if that he encresced were or noon.
His bookes and his bagges many oon
He hath byforn him on his counter bord,
For riche was his tresor and his hord;
For which ful fast his contour dore he schette;
And eek he wolde no man schold him lette
Of his accomptes, for the mene-tyme;
And thus he sat, til it was passed prime.
Dan Johan was risen in the morn also,
And in the gardyn walkith to and fro.
And hath his thinges said ful curteisly.
This good wyf com walkyng ful prively
Into the gardyn, ther he walketh softe,
And him saluеth, as sche hath doon ful ofte.
A mayde child com in hir compaignie,
Which as hir list sche may governe and gye,
For yit under the yerde was the mayde.
"O dere cosyn myn, dan Johan," sche sayde,
"What ayleth yow so rathe to arise?"
"Nece," quod he, "it aught y-nough suffise
Fyve houres for to slepe upon a night;
But it were for eny old palled wight,
As ben these weddid men, that ly and dare,
As in a forme ther lith a wery hare,
Were al for-straught with houndes gret and smale.
But, dere nece, why be ye so pale?
I trowe certis, that oure goode man
Hath on yow laborid, sith the night bygan,
That yow were nede to resten hastiliche."
And with that word he lowgh ful meriliche,
And of his owne thought he wex al reed.

This faire wyf bygan to schake hir heed,
And sayde thus, " Ye, God wot al," quod sche.
" Nay, cosyn myn, it stant not so with me.
For by that God, that yaf me soule and lif,
In al the reme of Fraunce is ther no wyf
That lasse lust hath to that sory play;
For I may synge allas and waylaway
That I was born; but to no wight," quod sche
" Dar I not telle how it stont with me.
Wherfor I think out of this lond to wende,
Or elles of my-self to make an ende,
So ful am I of drede and eek of care."

This monk bygan upon this wyf to stare;
And sayd, " Allas! my nece, God forbede,
That ye for eny sorw, or eny drede,
Fordo your self; but telleth me your greef,
Paraventure I may in youre mescheef
Councel or help; and therfor telleth me
Al your annoy, for it schal be secré.
For on my portos here I make an oth,
That never in my lif, for lief ne loth,
Ne schal I of no counseil you bywraye."
" The same ayein," quod sche, " to yow I saye.
By God and by this portos wil I swere,
Though men me wolde al in peces tere,
Ne schal I never, for to go to helle,
Bywreye a word of thing that ye me telle,
Not for no cosynage, ne alliaunce,
But verrayly for love and affiaunce."
Thus ben thay sworn, and herupon i-kist,
And ilk of hem told other what hem list.

" Cosyn," quod sche, " if that I had a space,
As I have noon, and namly in this place,
Then wold I telle a legend of my lyf,
What I have suffred sith I was a wyf
With myn housbond, though he be your cosyn."
" Nay," quod this monk, " by God and seint Martyn!
He nis no more cosyn unto me,
Than is this leef that hongeth on the tre;
I cleped him so, by seint Denis of Fraunce,
To have the more cause of acqueyntaunce
Of yow, which I have loved specially

Aboven alle wommen sikerly;
This swere I yow on my professioun.
Tellith youre greef, lest that he come adoun,
And hasteth yow; and goth your way anoon."
"My deere love," quod sche, "O dan Johan!
Ful leef me were this counseil for to hyde,
But out it moot, I may no more abyde.
Myn housbond is to me the worste man,
That ever was siththe the world bigan;
But sith I am a wif, it sit nought me
To telle no wight of oure priveté,
Neyther a-bedde, ne in none other place;
God schilde I scholde telle it for his grace!
A wyf ne schal not say of hir housbonde
But al honour, as I can understonde.
Save unto yow thus moche telle I schal;
As help me God, he is not worth at al,
In no degré, the valieu of a flie.
But yit me greveth most his nigardye.
And wel ye wot, that wymmen naturelly
Desiren sixe thinges, as wel as I.
They wolde that here housbondes scholde be
Hardy, and wys, and riche, and therto fre,
And buxom to his wyf, and freisch on bedde.
But by the Lord that for us alle bledde,
For his honour my-selven to arraye,
A sonday next comyng yit most I paye
An hundred frank, or elles I am lorn.
Yit were me lever that I were unborn,
Than me were doon a sclaunder or vilenye.
And if myn housbond eek might it espie,
I ner but lost; and therfor I yow praye
Lene me this somme, or elles mot I deye.
Dan Johan, I seie, lene me this hundreth frankes;
Pardé I wil nouht faile the my thankes,
If that yow lust to do that I yowe praye.
For at a certein day I wol yow paye,
And do to yow what pleasaunce and servise
That I may do, right as you list devyse;
And but I do, God take on me vengeaunce,
As foul as hadde Geneloun of Fraunce!"
This gentil monk answerd in this manere;
"Now trewely, myn owne lady deere,

I have on yow so gret pité and reuthe,
That I yow swere, and plighte yow my treuthe,
Than whan your housbond is to Flaundres fare,
I schal deliver yow out of youre care,
For I wol bringe yow an hundred frankes."
And with that word he caught hir by the schankes,
And hir embraced hard, and kist hir ofte.
"Goth now your way," quod he, "al stille and softe,
And let us dyne as sone as ever ye maye,
For by my chilindre it is prime of daye;
Goth now, and beth as trew as I schal be."
"How elles God forbede, sire!" quod sche.
And forth sche goth, as joly as a pye,
And bad the cookes that thai schold hem hye,
So that men myghte dyne, and that anoon.
Up to hir housbond this wif is y-goon,
And knokketh at his dore boldely.
"*Quy est la?*" quod he. "Peter! it am I,"
Quod sche. "How longe, sire, wol ye faste?
How longe tyme wol ye reken and caste
Your sommes, and your bokes, and your thinges?
The devel have part of alle such rekenynges.
Ye have i-nough pardy of Goddes sonde.
Com doun to day, and let your bagges stonde.
Ne be ye not aschamed, that daun Johan
Schal alday fastyng thus elenge goon?
What? let us hiere masse, and go we dyne."
"Wif," quod this man, "litel canstow divine
The curious besynesse that we have;
For of us chapmen, al-so God me sake,
And by that lord that cleped is seint Ive,
Scarsly amonges twelve, two schuln thrive
Continuelly, lastyng unto our age.
We may wel make cheer and good visage,
And dryve forth the world, as it may be,
And kepen our estat in priveté,
Til we be deed, or elles that we playe
A pilgrimage, or goon out of the waye;
And therfor have I gret necessité
Upon this queynte world to avyse me.
For evermor we moste stond in drede

Of hap and fortun in our chapmanhede.
To Flaundres wil I go to morw at day,
And come agayn as soone as ever I may;
For which, my deere wif, I the byseeke
As be to every wight buxom and meeke,
And for to kepe oure good be curious,
And honestly governe wel our hous.
Thou hast y-nough, in every maner wise,
That to a thrifty housbond may suffise.
The lakketh noon array, ne no vitaile;
Of silver in thy purs thou mayst not faile."
And with that word his countour dore he schitte.
And doun he goth; no lenger wold he lette;
And hastily a masse was ther i-sayd,
And spedily the tables were i-layd,
And to the dyner faste thay hem spedde,
And rychely this chapman the monk fedde.
And after dyner daun Johan sobrely
This chapman took on-part, and prively
Sayd him thus: "Cosyn, it stondeth so,
That, wel I se, to Brigges wol ye go;
God and seint Austyn spede you and gyde.
I pray yow, cosyn, wisly that ye ryde;
Governeth yow also of your diete
Al temperelly, and namely in this hete.
Betwix us tuo nedeth no straunge fare;
Far wel, cosyn, God schilde you fro care.
If eny thing ther be by day or night,
If it lay in my power and my might,
That ye wil me comaunde in eny wise,
It schal be doon, right as ye wol devyse.
O thing er that ye goon, if it mighte be,
I wolde praye yow for to lene me
An hundred frankes for a wyke or tweye,
For certeyn bestis that I moste beye,
To store with a place that is oures;
(God help me so, I wolde it were youres!)
I schal not faile seurly of my day,
Nought for a thousand frankes, a myle way.
But let this thing be secré, I yow praye;
For for the bestis this night most I paye.
And fare now wel, myn owne cosyn deere;
Graunt mercy of your cost and of your cheere."

This noble merchaunt gentilly anoon
Answerd and sayde: "O cosyn daun Johan,
Now sikerly this is a smal request;
My gold is youres, whanne that yow lest,
And nought oonly my gold, but my chaffare;
Tak what yow liste, God schilde that ye spare!
But oon thing is, ye know it wel y-nough
Of chapmen, that her money is here plough.
We may creaunce whils we have a name,
But goldles for to be it is no game.
Pay it agayn, whan it lith in your ese;
After my might ful fayn wold I yow plese."
This hundred frankes he fet forth anoon,
And prively he took hem to daun Johan;
No wight in al this world wist of this loone,
Savyng the marchaund, and daun Johan alloone.
Thay drynke, and speke, and rome a while and playe,
Til that dan Johan rydeth to his abbaye.
The morwe cam, and forth this marchaund rideth
To Flaundres-ward, his prentis wel him gydeth,
To that he cam to Brigges merily.
Now goth this marchaund faste and busily
About his neede, and bieth, and creaunceth;
He neither pleyeth atte dys, ne daunceth;
But as a marchaund, schortly for to telle,
He had his lyf, and ther I let him duelle.
The sonday next the marchaund was agoon,
To Seint Denys i-come is daun Johan,
With croune and berd al freisch and newe i-schave.
In al the hous ther nas so litel a knave,
Ne no wight elles, that he nas ful fayn,
For that my lord dan Johan was come agayn.
And schortly to the poynte for to gon,
This faire wif acordith with dan Johan,
That for these hundred frank he schuld al night
Have hir in his armes bolt upright;
And this acord parformed was in dede.
In mirth al night a bisy lif thay lede
Til it was day, than dan Johan went his way,
And bad the meigné far wel, have good day.
For noon of hem, ne no wight in the toun,

Hath of dan Johan noon suspeccioun;
And forth he rideth hom to his abbay,
Or wher him list, no more of him I say.
This marchaund, whan that endid was the faire,
To Seynt Denys he gan for to repeire,
And with his wif he maketh fest and cheere,
And tellith hir that chaffar is so deere,
That needes most he make a chevisaunce,
For he was bounde in a reconisaunce,
To paye twenty thousand scheldes anoon.
For which this marchaund is to Paris goon,
To borwe of certeyn frendes that he hadde
A certein frankes, and some with him he ladde.
And whan that he was come into the toun
For gret chiertee and gret affeccioun,
Unto dan Johan he first goth him to playe;
Nought for to borwe of him no kyn monaye,
But for to wite and se of his welfare,
And for to telle him of his chaffare,
As frendes doon, whan thay ben met in fere.
Dan Johan him maketh fest and mery cheere;
And he him told agayn ful specially,
How he hadde bought right wel and graciously
(Thanked be God)! al hole his marchaundise;
Save that he most in alle manere wise
Maken a chevyssauns, as for his best;
And than he schulde be in joye and rest.
Dan Johan answerde, "Certis I am fayn,
That ye in hele are comen hom agayn;
And if that I were riche, as have I blisse,
Of twenty thousand scheld schulde ye not mysse
For ye so kyndely this other day
Lente me gold; and as I can and may
I thanke yow, by God and by seint Jame.
But natheles I took it to oure dame,
Youre wif at home, the same gold ayein
Upon your bench, sche wot it wel certeyn,
By certein toknes that I can hir telle.
Now by your leve, I may no lenger duelle;
Oure abbot wol out of this toun anoon,
And in his compaignye moot I goon.
Grete wel oure dame, myn owen nece swete,

And far wel, dere cosyn, til that we meete."
This marchaund, which that was bothe war and wys,
Creaunced hath, and payed eek in Parys
To certeyn Lombardes redy in her hond
This somme of gold, and took of hem his bond,
And hom he goth, as mery as a popinjay.
For wel he knew he stood in such array,
That needes most he wynne in that viage
A thousand frankes, above al his costage.
His wyf ful redy mette him at the gate,
As sche was wont of old usage algate:
And al that night in mirthe thay ben sette,
For he was riche, and clerly out of dette.
Whan it was day, this marchaund gan embrace
His wyf al newe, and kist hir on hir face,
And up he goth, and maketh it ful tough.
"No more," quod sche, "by God, ye have y-nough;"
And wantounly with him sche lay and playde,
Till atte laste thus this marchaund sayde:—
"By God," quod he, "I am a litel wroth
With yow, my wyf, although it be me loth;
And wite ye why? by God, as that I gesse,
Ye han i-maad a maner straungenesse
Bitwixe me and my cosyn dan Johan.
Ye schold have warned me, er I hadde goon,
That he yow had an hundred frankes payd
By redy tokne; and huld him evil appayd
For that I to him spak of chevysaunce,
(Me semede so as by his countenaunce);
But natheles, by God of heven king!
I thoughte nought to axe him no thing.
I pray the, wyf, do thou no more so.
Tel me alway, er that I fro the go,
If eny dettour have in myn absence
I-payed the, lest in thy necgligence
I may him axe a thing that he hath payed."
This wyf was not affered ne affrayed,
But boldely sche sayde, and that anoon:
"Mary! I difty that false monk, dan Johan!
I kepe not of his tokenes never a del;
He took me a certeyn gold, that wot I wel.

What? evel thedom on his monkes snowte!
For, God it wot! I wende withoute doute,
That he had yeve it me, bycause of yow,
To do therwith myn honour and my prow,
For cosynage, and eek for bele cheer
That he hath had ful ofte tyme heer.
But synnes that I stonde in this disjoynt,
I wol answere yow schortly to the poynt.
Ye han mo slakke dettours than am I;
For I wol paye yow wel and redily
Fro day to day, and if so be I faile,
I am your wif, score it upon my taile,
And I schal paye it as soone as I may.
For by my trouthe, I have on myn array,
And nought on wast, bistowed it every del.
And for I have bistowed it so wel
To youre honour, for Goddes sake I saye,
As beth nought wroth, but let us laugh and playe;
Ye schul my joly body have to wedde;
By God, I wol not paye yow but on bedde;
Foryeve it me, myn owne spouse deere;
Turne hider-ward and make better cheere."
This marchaund saugh noon other remedy;
And for to chide, it nas but foly,
Sith that the thing may not amendid be.
"Now, wif," he sayde, "and I foryive it the;
But by thi lif, ne be no more so large;
Keep better my good, this yive I the in charge.
Thus endeth now my tale, and God us sende
Talyng y-nough, unto our lyves ende!"

THE PRIORESSES TALE

"WEL sayd, by corpus bones!" quoth oure Host,
"Now longe may thou sayle by the coast,
Sir gentil master, gentil mariner!
(God give the monk a thousand evil years,
Haha! felaws, be ware for such a jape.
The monk put in the mannes hood an ape,

And in his wyves eek, by seint Austyn.
Bring ye no monkes more unto your in.)
But now pas over, and let us loke aboute,
Who shal now telle first of al this route
Another tale;" and with that word he sayde,
As curteisly as it had ben a mayde,
"My lady Prioresse, by your leve,
So that I wist I sholde you not greve,
I wolde deme, that ye telle sholde
A tale next, if so were that ye wolde.
Now wil ye vouche sauf, my lady deere?"
"Gladly," quoth she, and sayd in this manere.

O Lord, oure Lord, thy name how marveylous
Is in this large world y-spread (quoth she)
For nought only thy laude precious
Performèd is by men of high degree,
But by the mouthes of children thy bountee
Is glorified, for on the moders breste
They praise Thee and thy glorie they manireste.
Wherfore in laude, as I best can or may,
Of Thee and of thy white lily flour,
Which that thee bare, and is a madye alway,
To telle a story I wil do my labour;
Not that I may increasen her honour,
For next her Sone she is herselt the whole
Of honour and the helpe of every soule.
O moder mayde, o mayde moder free!
O bussh unburnt, burning in Moses sight,
Thou that didst bring doun from the deitee,
Thurgh thin humblesse, the spirit to alight;
Of whose vertu, in thy pure herte aright,
Conceyvèd was the Fadres sapience;
Help me to telle it in thy reverence.
Lady, thy bountee, and thy magnificence,
Thy vertu and thi gret humilitee,
Ther may no tonge expres in no science;
For often, lady, ere men pray to thee,
Thou goest bifore of thy benignitee,
And gettest us the light, through thy prayere
To gyden us unto thy Sone deere.
My cunnyng is so weak, o blisful queene,
For to declare thy grete worthinesse.

That I may not this in my wit sustaine;
But as a child of twelf month old or lesse,
That scarce can a word or two expresse,
Right so fare I, and therfore I you praye,
Guide my song, that I shal of you saye.

Ther was in Asia, in a greet citee,
Among the Cristen folk a Jewerye,
Sustainèd by a lord of that contree,
For usury, and lucre of felonye,
Hateful to Crist, and to His compaignye;
And through the strete men mighte ride and wende,
For it was free, and open at every ende.

A litel school of Cristen folk ther stood
Doun at the further end, in which ther were
Children an heep comen of Cristen blood,
That lernèd in that schoole, yere by yere,
Such maner doctrine as men usèd there;
That is to sey, to syng and eke to rede,
As smale childer do in their childhede.

Among these children was a widows sone,
A litel clerk but seven year of age,
That day by day to schoole went alone;
And eek also, wherso he saw the imáge
Of Cristes moder, had he in uságe,
As him was taught, to knele adoun, and say
His *Ave Mary*, as he goeth his way.

Thus hath this widow her litel child y-taught
Oure blisful lady, Cristes moder deere,
To worship ay, and he forgat it not;
For simple child wil alway rémembér.
But ay when I bethinke me of this matére,
Seint Nicholas stands ever in my presénce,
For he so young to Crist did reverence.

This litel child, his litel book lernynge,
As he sat in the schoole with his primér,
He *Alma redemptoris* herde synge,
When children lerned to sing that high prayér;
And as he durst, he drew him ever near,
And herknèd ever the wordes and the note,
Til he the firste vers knew al by rote.

Nought wist he what his Latyn meant to say,
For he so yong and tender was of age;

But on a day his felaw gan he pray
To expound to him the song in his langáge,
Or telle him what this song was in uságe;
This prayd he him to construe and declare,
Ful often tyme upon his kneës bare.
His felaw, which that elder was than he,
Answerd him thus: "This song, I have herd seye,
Was makèd of our blisful lady free,
Hire to salute, and eke her for to pray.
To be our help and socour whan we die.
I can no more expound in this matér;
I lerne song, I can no more gramér."
"And is this song y-made in reverence
Of Cristes moder?" sayde this innocent;
"Now certes I wol do my diligence
To conne it al, ere Cristemasse has went;
Though that my spelling shal be al for went,
And I shal be thrice beaten in an hour,
I wol it conne, our lady to honoúre."
His felaw taught him home-ward privily
From day to day, til he it knew by rote,
And then he sang it wel and boldely;
Twice on the day it passèd through his throte,
From word to word accordyng to the note,
To school-ward and to home-ward when he went;
On Cristes moder set was his entent.
As I have sayd, throughout the Jewerye
This litel child as he cam to and fro,
Ful merily than wold he synge and crie,
O alma redemptoris, evermo;
The swetness hath his herte piercèd so
Of Cristes moder, that to hir to pray
He can not stynt of syngyng by the way.
Oure firste foe, the serpent Sáthanás,
That hath in Jewes hert his waspes nest,
Upswelled and sayde: "O Hebrew peple, allas!
Is this a thing to you that is honést,
That such a boy shal walken as he list
In youre despyt, and synge of such sentence,
Which is against your lawes reverence?"
From thennesforth the Jewes have conspirèd
This innocent out of this world to chase;

An homicide therto, yea, have thay hirèd.
That in an alley had a privy place;
And as the childe gan forth for to pace,
This false Jewe him caught and held ful faste,
And kitte his throte, and in a pit him caste.
I say that in a pitte they him threw,
Wher as the Jewes purgen their entraile.
O cursed folk! O Herodes al new . . . .
What may your evil entente you availe?
Morther wil out, certeyn it wil nought faile,
And chiefly where the honoúr of God shulde spreade,
The blood out crieth on your cursed dede.
O martir servaunt to virginitee,
Now mayst thou synge, folowyng ever alone
The white lamb celestial, quoth she,
Of which the grete evaungelist saint John
In Patmos wrote, which seith that thay have gone
Bifore the Lamb, and synge a song al newe,
That never in this worlde wommen knewe.
This pore widowe wayteth al this night,
After this litel child, but he cometh nought;
For which as soone as it was dayes light,
With face pale, in drede and busy thoughte,
She hath at schoole and every-wher him soughte;
Til fynally she gan so far espýe,
That he was last seen in the Jewerie.
With modres pitee in hir brest enclosèd,
She goeth, as she were half out of hir mynde,
To every place, wher she hath supposèd
By liklihoode her childe for to fynde;
And ever on Cristes moder meke and kynde
She cried, and at the laste thus she wroughte,
Among the cursed Jewes she him soughte.
She axeth, and she prayeth piteously
To every Jew that dwellèd in that place,
To telle hir, if her child is went ther by;
They sayden "nay"; but Jhesu of his grace
Put in her thought, withinne a litel space,
That in that place after her sone she cryde,
Wher he was casten in a pit bysyde.
O grete God, that pérformest thy laude

By mouth of innocents, lo, here thy might;
This gemme of chastitee, this emeralde,
And eke of martirdom the ruby bright,
Where he with throte y-carven lay upright,
He *Alma redemptoris* gan to synge
So loude, that al the place bigan to rynge.
The Cristen folk, that through the strete went,
In comen, for to wonder upon this thing;
And hastily for the provóst they sent.
He cam anon, withoute tarying,
And praysèd Crist, that is of heven Kyng,
And eke His moder, honour of mankynde,
And after that the Jewes did he bynde.
This child with piteous lamentacioún
Up taken was, syngyng his song alway;
And with honoúr of grete processioún,
Thay caried him unto the next abbáy.
His moder swoonyng by the biere lay;
And scarcely mighte the peple that was there
This newe Rachel bringe fro the biere.
With torment and with shameful deth each one
This provost made these Jewes for to die,
That of this morder wist, and that anon;
He wolde allowe no such crueltie;
Evel shal have, that evyl doth alway.
Therefore with wilde hors he did them drawe,
And after that he hung them by the lawe.
Upon his biere ay lieth this innocent
Bifore the chief altar whiles masse laste;
And after that, thabbot with his convént
Hath sped him for to burie him ful faste;
And when they holywater on him caste,
Yet spak this child, when sprinkled was the water,
And sang *O alma redemptoris mater.*
This abbot, which that was an holy man,
As monkes be, or as they oughten be,
This yonge child to cónjure he bigan,
And sayd: "O deere child, I bidde the,
In vertu of the holy Trinitee,
Tel me what is thy cause for to synge,

Since that thy throte is kit to my thinkyng."
" My throte is kit unto my nekke-bone,"
Sayde this child, " and as by way of kinde
I shulde be dead a longe tyme agone;
But Jhesu Crist, as ye in bookes fynde,
Wil that His glorie laste and be in mynde;
And for the worship of His moder deere,
Yet may I synge *O alma* loude and cleere.
" This welle of mercy, Cristes moder deere,
I loved alway, after my small connynge;
And when that I my lyf shulde forbear,
To me she cam, and bad me for to synge
This anthem verrily in my deyinge,
As ye have herd; and, whan that I had sunge,
Me thought she layde a grayn under my tunge.
" Wherfor I synge, and synge must certeyne
In honour of that blisful mayden free,
Til from my tunge taken is the greyne.
And after that thus saide she to me:
" My litel child, now wil I fetche thee,
Whan that the grayn is from thi tunge y-take;
Be not aghast, I wil thee not forsake."
This holy monk, this abbot him mene I,
His tunge out caught, and took awey the greyn;
And he gaf up the gost ful softely.
And when the abbot hath this wonder seen,
His saltе teres trikled doun as reyn;
And gruf he fel adoun unto the grounde,
And stille he lay, as he had been y-bounde.
The convent eke lay on the pavyment
Wepyng and praysing Cristes moder deere.
And after that they rise, and forth thay went,
And took away this martir from his biere,
And in a tombe of marble stones cleere
Enclosed they this litel body sweete;
Ther he is now, God grant us him to meete
O yonge Hugh of Lyncoln; slayn also
With cursed Jewes as it is notáble,
For it is but a litel while ago,
Pray eke for us, we synful folk unstáble,
That of his mercy God so merciable
On us his grete mercy multiplie,
For reverence of his modir Marie. Amen.

THE TALE OF SIR THOPAS

When sayd was this mirácle, every man
As sober was, that wonder was to see,
Til that oure Host to jape soon bigan,
And then at erst he lokèd upon me,
And sayde thus: "What man art thou?" quoth he.
"Thou lokest as thou woldest fynde an hare,
For ever upon the ground I see thee stare.
"Approche near, and loke merily.
Now ware you, sirs, and let this man have space.
He in the waist is shape as wel as I;
This were a popet in an arm to embrace
For any woman, smal and fair of face.
He semeth elvish by his countenaunce,
For unto no wight doth he daliaunce.
"Say now som what, since other folk have said;
Telle us a tale and that of mirthe anon."
"Hoste," quoth I, "be ye nought evil paid,
For other tale certes can I none,
But of a rym I lernèd yore agon."
"Yea, that is good," quoth he, "now shul we heere
Som deyntee thing, me thinketh by his cheere."

Lesteneth, lordyngs, in good entent,
And I wol telle verrayment
Of myrthe and of solas,
Al of a knyght was fair and gent
In batail and in tornament,
His name was Sir Thopas.
I-bore he was in fer contré,
In Flaundres, al byyonde the se,
At Poperyng in the place;
His fader was a man ful fre,
And lord he was of that contré,
As it was Goddes grace.
Sir Thopas wax a doughty swayn;
Whyt was his face as payndemayn,

His lippes reed as rose;
His rode is lik scarlet en grayn,
And I yow telle, in good certayn
He had a semly nose.
His heer, his berd, was lik safroun,
That to his girdil raught adoun;
His schoon of cordewane;
Of Brigges were his hosen broun;
His robe was of sicladoun,
That coste many a jane.
He couthe hunt at wilde deer,
And ride on haukyng for ryver
With gray goshauk on honde;
Therto he was a good archeer,
Of wrastelyng was noon his peer,
Ther eny ram schal stonde.
Ful many mayde bright in bour
Thay mourne for him, *par amour*,
Whan hem were bet to slepe:
But he was chast and no lecchour,
And sweet as is the brembre flour
That bereth the reede heepe.
And so it fel upon a day,
For soth as I yow telle may,
Sir Thopas wold out ryde;
He worth upon his steede gray,
And in his hond a launcegay,
A long sword by his syde.
He priketh thurgh a fair forest,
Therin is many a wilde best,
Ye, bothe buk and hare;
And as he prikede north and est,
I tel it yow, hym had almest
Bityd a sory care.
Ther springen herbes greet and smale,
The licorys and the cetewale,
And many a clow gilofre,
And notemuge to put in ale,
Whethir it be moist or stale,
Or for to lay in cofre.
The briddes synge, it is no nay,
The sperhauk and the popinjay,
That joye it was to heere;

The throstilcock maad eek his lay,
The woode dowve upon the spray
  Tho song ful lowde and cleere.
Sir Thopas fel in love-longinge,
Whan that he herde the briddes synge,
  And priked as he were wood;
His faire steede in his prikynge
So swette, that men might him wrynge,
  His sydes were al blood.
Sir Thopas eek so wery was
For priking on the softe gras,
  So feers was his corrage,
That doun he layd him in the place
To make his steede som solace,
  And yaf him good forage.
" O, seinte Mary, *benedicite*,
What eylith this love at me
  To bynde me so sore?
Me dremed al this night, pardé,
An elf queen schal my lemman be,
  And slepe under my gore.
An elf queen wol I have, i-wis,
For in this world no womman is
  Worthy to be my make
    In toune;
Alle othir wommen I forsake,
And to an elf queen I me take
  By dale and eek by doune."
Into his sadil he clomb anoon,
And priked over stile and stoon
  An elf queen for to spye;
Til he so longe hath ryden and goon,
That he fond in a privé woon
  The contré of faïrye,
    So wylde;
For in that contré was ther noon,
That to hym durste ride or goon,
  Neither wif ne childe.
Til that ther cam a greet geaunt,
His name was sir Olifaunt,
  A perilous man of dede;
He swar, " Child, by Termagaunt,
But-if thou prike out of myn haunt,

Anoon I slee thy stede,
With mace.
Heer is the queen of fayerie,
With harp, and lute, and symphonye,
Dwellyng in this place."
The child sayd: " Also mote I the,
To morwe wil I meete with the,
Whan I have myn armure.
And yit I hope, par ma fay,
That thou schalt with this launcegay
Abyen it ful soure;
Thy mawe
Schal I persyn, if that I may,
Er it be fully prime of day,
For heer schalt thou be slawe."
Sir Thopas drough on-bak ful faste;
This geaunt at him stoones caste
Out of a fell staf slynge;
But faire eschapeth child Thopas,
And al it was thurgh Goddis gras,
And thurgh his faire berynge.
Yet lesteneth, lordynges, to my tale,
Merier than the nightyngale.
For nowe I wol yow roune.
How sir Thopas with sides smale,
Prikynge over hul and dale,
Is come ageyn to toune.
His mery men comaunded he,
To make him bothe game and gle,
For needes most he fighte
With a geaunt with heedes thre,
For paramours and jolité
Of oon that schon ful brighte,
" Do come," he sayde, " my mynstrales
And gestours for to telle tales
Anoon in myn armynge,
Of romaunces that ben reales,
Of popes and of cardinales,
And eek of love-longeinge."
Thay fet him first the swete wyn,
And made him eek in a maselyn
A real spicerye,
Of gyngebred that was so fyn,

And licorys, and eek comyn,
With sugre that is trye.
He dede next his white leere
Of cloth of lake whyt and cleere
A brech and eek a schert;
And next his schert an aketoun,
And over that an haberjoun,
For persyng of his hert;
And over that a fyn hauberk,
Was al i-wrought of Jewes werk,
Ful strong it was of plate;
And over that his cote-armour,
As whyt as is a lily flour,
In which he wolde debate.
His scheld was al of gold so red,
And therinne was a bores heed,
A charbocle by his syde;
And ther he swor on ale and bred
How that the geaunt schal be deed,
Bytyde what betyde.
His jambeux were of quirboily,
His swerdes schethe of yvory,
His helm of latoun bright.
His sadel was of rowel boon,
His bridel as the sonne schon,
Or as the moone light;
His spere was of fine cipres,
That bodeth werre, and no thing pees,
The heed ful scharp i-grounde.
His steede was al dappul gray,
Hit goth an ambel in the way
Ful softely and rounde
In londe.
Lo, lordes, heer is a fyt;
If ye wil eny more of it,
To telle it wol I fonde.

Fit II

Now hold your mouth for charité,
Bothe knight and lady fre,
And herkneth to my spelle;

Of batail and of chivalry,
Of ladys love drewery,
  Anoon I wol yow telle.
Men speken of romauns of pris,
Of Horn child and of Ypotis,
  Of Bevys and sir Gy,
Of sir Libeaux, and Pleyndamour;
But sir Thopas bereth the flour
  Of real chivalry.
His goode steede he bistrood,
And forth upon his way he glood,
  As sparkeles out of the bronde;
Upon his crest he bar a tour,
And therin stiked a lily flour:—
  God schilde his corps fro schonde!
And for he was a knyght auntrous,
He nolde slepen in noon hous,
  But liggen in his hood.
His brighte helm was his wonger,
And by him baytith his destrer
  Of herbes fyne and goode.
Him self drank water of the welle,
As dede the knight sir Percivelle
  So worthy under wede,
Tille it was on a daye,———

THE TALE OF MELIBEUS

"No more of this, for Goddes dignitee!"
Quoth then our Hoste, "for thou makest me
So wery of thy very foolishnesse,
That, al-so wisly God my soule blesse,
Myn eeres aken for thy sorry speche.
Now may the devel such a ryme fetch.
This may wel be rym dogerel," quoth he.
"Why so?" quoth I, "why wilt thou staye me
More of my tale than another man,
Since that it is the beste rym I can?"
"By God!" quoth he, "thou shalt cease utterly
Thy sorry rymyng is not worth a flye;

Thou dost nought else but spendist al our tyme.
Sir, at one word, thou shalt no longer ryme.
Let see if thou canst tellen ought in gest,
Or telle in prose som what atte lest,
In which ther be som merthe or else doctrine."
" Gladly," quoth I, " by Goddes swete pain,
I wol you telle a litel thing in prose,
That oughte plese yow, as I suppose,
Or else ye certes be too daungerous.
It is a moral tale vertuous,
Al be it told som tyme in sondry wise
Of sondry folk, as I shal you devyse.
As thus, ye wot that every evaungelist,
That telleth us the peyne of Jhesu Crist,
Ne saith nat alle thing as his felawes doth;
But nonetheles their sentence is al soth,
And alle accorden as in their sentence,
Al be ther in their tellyng difference.
For some of them say more, and some say lesse,
When thay his piteous passioun expresse;—
I mene of Mark, Mathew, Luk and Johan;—
But douteles their sentence is al one.
Therfore, lordynges alle, I you biseche,
If you think that I varye as in my speche,
As thus, though that I telle some what more
Of proverbes, than ye al have herd bifore
Comprehended in this litel tretys here,
To enforcen with theffect of my matere,
And though I not the same wordes say
As ye have herd, yet to you alle I pray,
Blameth me nought; for, in my ful sentence,
Shul ye no wher fynde any difference
From al the sentence of this tretys lite,
After the which this litil tale I write.
And therfor herken what I shal you say,
And let me tellen al my tale, I pray."

A YONG man called Melibeus, mighty and riche, bygat upon his wif, that called was Prudens, a doughter which that called was Sophie. Upon a day byfel, that for his desport he is went into the feldes him to play. His wif and his doughter eek hath he laft in-with his hous, of which the dores were fast shut. Thre of his olde foos have it espyed, and setten

laddres to the walles of his hous, and by the wyndowes be entred, and beetyn his wyf, and woundid his doughter with fyve mortal woundes, in fyve sondry places, that is to sayn, in her feet, in her hondes, in her eeres, in her nose, and in her mouth; and lafte her for deed, and went away.

When Melibeus retourned was into his hous, and saw al this meschief, he, lik a man mad, rendyng his clothes, gan wepe and crie. Prudens his wyf, as ferforth as she dorste, bisought him of his wepyng to stynte. But not forthi he gan to crie ever lenger the more.

This noble wyf Prudence remembred hir upon the sentens of Ovide, in his book that cleped is the Remedy of Love, wher as he seith: He is a fool that destourbeth the moder to wepe in the deth of hir childe, til she have i-wept hir fille, as for a certeyn tyme; and than shal man doon his diligence as with amyable wordes hire to recomforte and pray hir of hir wepyng to stinte. For which resoun this noble wif Prudens suffred hir housbonde for to wepe and crie, as for a certeyn space; and whan she saw hir tyme, she sayd him in this wise: "Allas! my lord," quoth she, "why make ye youre self for to be lik a fool? Forsothe it apperteyneth not to a wys man, to make such sorwe. Your doughter, with the grace of God, shal cured be and escape. And al were it so that she right now were deed, ye ne oughte nought as for hir deth youre silf destroye. Senec saith, The wise man shal not take too gret discomfort for the deth of his children, but certes he shulde suffren it in pacience, as wel as he abydeth the deth of his owne persone."

This Melibeus answerde anon and sayde: "What man," quoth he, "shuld of his wepynge stynte, that hath so gret a cause for to wepe? Jhesu Crist, oure Lord, him self wepte for the deth of Lazarus his frend." Prudens answerde: "Certes, wel I wot, attemperel wepyng is no thing forbidden to him that sorwful is, amonges folk in sorwe, but it is rather graunted him to wepe. The apostel Poule unto the Romayns writeth, A man shal rejoyce with them that maken joye, and wepe with such folk as wepen. But though attemperel wepyng be graunted, outrageous wepynge certes is forbidden. Mesure of wepynge shulde be conserved, after the lore of Crist that techeth us Senec; Whan that thi frend is deed, quoth he, let nought thin eyen too moyste be of teres, nor too moche drye; although the teeres come to thine eyen, let them not falle. And whan thou hast for-gon thy frend, do

diligence to gete another frende; and this is more wisedom than to wepe for thy frend, which that thou hast lost, for therein is no remedy. And therfore if ye governe you by sapience, put away sorwe out of youre hert. Remembre you that Jhesus Sirac saith, A man that is joyous and glad in herte, it him conserveth florishinge in his age; but sothly sorweful herte maketh his boones drye. He saith eek thus, that sorwe in herte sleth ful many a man. Salamon saith, that right as mothes in shepes fleece annoyeth the clothes, and the smale wormes on the tre the fruyte, right so annoyeth sorwe the herte. Wherfore us oughte as wel in the deth of oure children, as in the losse of oure goodes temporales, have pacience. Remembre you upon the pacient Jop, whan he hadde lost his children and his temporal substance, and in his body endured and receyved ful many a grevous tribulacioun, yit sayde he thus: Oure Lord it sent unto me, oure Lord it hath raft fro me; right so as oure Lord wil, right so be it doon; i-blessed be the name of oure Lord!" To these forsayde thinges answerith Melibeus unto his wif Prudens: "Alle thine wordes ben soth," quoth he, "and therto profytable, but sothly myn herte is so troubled with this sorwe, that I know not what to do." "Let calle," quoth Prudence, "thy trewe frendes alle, and thy linage, whiche that be trewe and wise; tell them youre grevaunce, and herken what they say in counsilynge, and you governe after there sentence. Salomon saith, Werke al thi thing by counseil, and thou shalt never rewe."

Than, by the counseil of his wyf Prudens, this Melibeus let calle a gret congregacioun of peple, as surgiens, phisiciens, olde, and yonge, and some of his olde enemyes recounsiled (as by their appearance) to his love and to his grace; and therwithal ther come some of his neighebours, that deden him reverence more for drede than for love, as happeth ofte. Ther comen also ful many subtil flaterers, and wise advoketes lerned in the lawe. And whan these folk togidere assemblid were, this Melibeus in sorwful wyse shewed hem his case, and by the maner of his speche, it semede that in herte he bar a cruel ire, redy to do vengeance upon his foos, and sodeynly desirede that the werre shulde bygynne; but natheles yit axed he their counseil in this matier. A chirurgien, by licens and assent of suche as were wyse, up ros, and to Melibeus sayde, as ye may hiere.

"Sir," quoth he, "as to us chirurgiens appertieneth, that

we do to every wight the beste that we can, wher as we ben withholde, and to oure pacient we do no damage; wherfore it happeth many tyme and ofte, that whan tweye have each wounded other, one same surgien heleth them bothe; where unto oure art it is not perteyned to norishe werre, nor parties to supporte. But certes, as to curing of youre doughter, al be it so that she perilously be woundid, we shullen do so tentyf business fro day to night, that with the grace of God she shal be hool and sound, as soone as it is possible." Almost right in the same wise the phisiciens answerden, save that thay sayden a fewe wordes more; that ryght as maladies be cured by their contraries, right so shal men cure werre by vengeaunce. His neyghebours ful of envy, his feyned freendes that seemede recounsiled, and his flatereres, maden semblaunt of wepyng, and added moche to this matiere, in preisyng gretly Melibe of might, of power, of riches, and of frendes, despisinge the power of his adversaries; and sayden clearly, that he anon shulde wreke him on his adversaries be bygynnynge of werre.

Up roos thanne an advocate that was wys, by leve and by counseil of othere that were wise, and sayde: "Lordynges, the need for whiche we be assemblit in this place is ful hevy thing, and an high matier, bycause of the wrong and of the wikkednes that hath ben doon, and eek by resoun of the grete damages that in tyme comyng be possible to falle for the same, and eek bycause of the grete richesse and power of the partes bothe; for the whiche resouns, it were a ful gret peril to erren in these materes. Wherfore, Melibeus, this is oure sentence; we counseile you, aboven alle thinges, that right anoon thou do diligence in kepyng of thy body in such a wyse that thou wante no spy nor watch thy body for to save. And after that, we counseile that in thin hous thou sette suffisaunt garisoun, so that thay may as wel thy body as thin hous defende. But certes for to move werre, and sodeynly for to do vengeance, we may not deme in so litel tyme that it were profitable. Wherfore we axen leysir and a space to have deliberacioun in this case to judge; for the comune proverbe saith this; he that soone judgeth, soone shal repente. And eek men sayn, that that judge is wys, that soone understondeth a matier, and judgeth by leysir. For al be it so that alle taryinge is anoyful, still it is no reproef in gevynge of judgement, nor of vengaunce takyng, whan it is suffisaunt and resonable. And that shewed oure Lord Jhesu Crist by

ensample, for whan that the womman that was i-take in advoutrie, was brought in his presence to knowen what shulde be doon of hir persone, al be it that he wist him self what that he wolde answere, yit wolde he not answere sodenyly, but he wolde have deliberacioun, and in the ground wrot twice. And by these causes we axe deliberacioun; and we shul thanne by the grace of God counseile the thing that shal be profytable." Upstarten thenne the yonge folkes anoon at once, and the moste parte of that companye have skorned these olde wise men, and bygonne to make noyse and sayden: "Right so as whil that iren is hot men sholden smyte, right so shulde men wreke there wronges, whil that they be freishe and newe;" and with lowde vois thay cryde, "Werre, werre."

Uproos then oon of these olde wise, and with his hond made countenaunce that men shulde holde them stille, and given him audience. "Lordyngs," quoth he, "ther is ful many a man that crieth 'werre, werre,' that wot ful litel what werre amounteth. Werre at his bygynnyng hath so greet an entre and so large, that every wight may entre whan him liketh, and lightly fynde werre; but certes what ende shal falle therof, it is not lightly to knowe. For sothly whan that werre is once bygonne, ther is ful many a child unbore of his moder that shal die yong, bycause of thilke werre, or elles lyve in sorwe and deye in wrecchidnes; and therfore, ere that eny werre be bygonne, men moste have gret counseil and gret deliberacioun." And whan this olde man wende to enforce his tale by resouns, wel nigh alle at once bygonne thay to rise, for to breke his tale, and beden him ful ofte his wordes to abrigge. For sothly he that precheth to them that liste not to heere his wordes, his sermoun them anoyeth. For Jhesus Sirac saith, that musik in wepyng is a noyous thing. This is to say, as moche avayleth to speke to-fore folk to whiche his speche annoyeth, as it is to synge byfore them whiche wepith. And whan this wise man saw he wanted audience, al shamefast he sette him doun agayn. For Salamon saith, Ther as thou may have noon audience, enforce thee not to speke. "I see wel," quoth this wise man, "that the comune proverbe is soth, that good counseil faileth, whan it is most neede." Yit hadde this Melibeus in his counseil many folk, that prively in his eere counseled him the contrarie in general audience.

Whan Melibeus hadde herd that the grettest party of his

counseil were accorded that he shulde make werre, anoon he consentede to there counseilyng, and fully affermed there sentence. Thanne dame Prudence, whan that she saw that hir housbonde shaped him to wreke him of his enemyes, and to begin werre, she in ful humble wise, whan she saw hire tyme, sayde him these wordes; "My lord," quoth she, "I yow biseche as hertily as I dar and kan, haste you nought too faste, and for alle guerdouns give me audience. For Peres Alfons saith, Who that doth to thee either good or harm, haste thee nought to quyten him, for in this wise thy freend wil abyde, and thin enemy shal the lenger lyve in drede. The proverbe saith, He hastith wel that wisly can abyde; and in wikked haste is no profyt." This Melibeus answerde unto his wyf Prudens; "I purpose not," quoth he, "to werke by thy counseil, for many causes and resouns; for certes every wight wolde holde me thanne a fool; this is to sayn, if I for thy counseil wolde chaunge thinges that affermed ben by so many wise. Secoundly, I say that alle wommen be wikked, and noon good of them alle. For of a thousand men, saith Salomon, I fond oon good man; but certes of alle wommen good womman fond I never noon. And also certes, if I governede me by thy counseil, it shulde seme that I hadde given to thee over me the maistry; and God forbeede it so were. For Jhesus Syrac saith, that if a wif have maistrie, she is contrarious to hir housbond. And Salomon saith, Never in thy lif to thy wyf, nor to thy child, nor to thy freend, geve no power over thi self; for better it were that thy children axen of thy persone thinges that been needful to them, than thou see thi self in the hondes of thy children. And also, if I wolde werke by thy counselynge, certes it moste som tyme be secré, til it were tyme that it moste be knowe; and this may not be."

Whan dame Prudence, ful debonerly and with gret pacience, hadde herd al that hir housbonde likede for to seye, thanne axede she of him licence for to speke, and sayde in this wise; "My lord," quoth she, "as to youre firste resoun, certes it may lightly be answered; for I say it is no foly to chaunge counsel whan the thing is chaungid, or elles whan the thing semeth otherwise than it was biforn. And moreover I say, though that ye have sworn and promised to parforme youre emprise, and natheles ye do not parforme thilke same emprise by juste cause, men shulde not saye therfore that ye were a lyere, nor for-sworn; for the book seith, that

the wise man maketh no lying, whan he torneth his corrage to the better. And al be it so that youre emprise be establid and ordeyned by gret multitude of people, yet thar ye not accomplise thilke same ordinaunce except you like; for the trouthe of a thing, and the profyt, ben rather founde in fewe folk that ben wise and ful of resoun, than by gret multitude of folk, ther every man crieth and clatereth what that him liketh; sothely such multitude is not honest. And to the secounde resoun, wheras ye sayn, that alle wommen ben wikke; save youre grace, certis ye despise alle wommen in this wise, and he that alle despysith, saith the book, alle despleseth. And Senec saith, Who-so wil have sapience, shal no man despraise, but he shal gladly teche the science that he can, withoute presumpcioun or pryde; and suche thinges as he nought can, he shal not ben aschamed to lerne them, and enquere of lasse folk than himself. And, sire, that ther hath be ful many a good womman maie lihtly be proved. Certes, sire, oure Lorde Jhesu Crist nolde nevere have descended to be borne of womman, if alle wommen hadde ben wikke. And after that, for the grete bounté that is in wommen, oure Lord Jhesu Crist, whan he was risen fro deth to lyve, apperede rather to a womman than to his apostles. And though that Salamon say, he fond never good womman, it folwith nought therfore, that alle wommen ben wikke; for though that he fonde noone goode wommen, certes many another man hath founden many a womman ful goode and trewe. Or elles paraventure thentent of Salamon was this, as in sovereyn bounté he fond no womman; this is to saye, that ther is no wight that hath soverein bounté, save God aloone, as he him-self recordeth in his Evaungelie. For ther is no creature so good, that he wanteth not som-what of the perfeccioun of God that is his makere. Youre thridde resoun is this; ye seyn that if ye governede you by counsel of me, it shulde seme that ye hadde geven me the maystry and the lordshipe over youre persone. Sire, save youre grace, it is not so; for if so were that no man shulde be counseiled but by them that hadde maystrie and lordshipe of his persone, men wolde nought be counseiled so ofte; for sothly thilke man that axeth counseil of a purpos, yet hath he free chois whether he wil werke by that purpos or noon. And as to youre ferthe resoun, ther ye sayn that the janglerie of wommen can hyde thinges that they wot not of; as who saith, that a womman can nought hyde that that she wot;

sire, these wordes ben understonde of wommen that ben jangelers and wikke; of whiche wommen men sayn that thre thinges dryven a man out of his oune hous; that is to saye, smoke, droppyng of reyn, and wikked wyfes. Of suche wommen saith Salomon, that it were better to a man to dwelle in desert, than with a womman that is riotous. And, sire, by youre leve, that am not I; for ye have ful ofte assayed my grete silence and my grete pacience, and eek how wel that I can hyde and hele thinges that be secrely to hyde. And sothly, as to youre fyfte resoun, wher as ye sayn, that in wikkede counseil wommen vanquisscheth men, God wot thilke resoun stont here in no stede; for understond now, ye axen counseil to do wickidnes; and if ye wile wirke wickidnes, and youre wyf restreyne thilke wicked purpos, and overcome you by resoun and by good counseil, certes youre wyf oweth rather be preised than y-blamed. Thus shulde ye understonde the philosopher that seith, In wicked counseil wommen vanquyschen their housbondes. And ther as ye blame alle wymmen and there resouns, I shal shewe by many resouns and ensamples that many a womman hath ben ful good, and yit be, and there counseiles ful holsome and profitable. Eke some men had sayd, that the counseilyng of wommen is either too dere, or too litel of pris. But al be it so that ful many a womman is badde, and hir counseil vile and not worth, yet have men founde many a ful good womman, and ful discret and wys in counseilyng. Lo, Jacob, by counseil of his moder Rebecca, wan the blessyng of his fader Ysaak, and the lordshipe of alle his bretheren. Judith, by hir goode counseil, delyverede the citee of Bethulie, in which she dwellide, out of the honde of Olophernus, that hadde it byseged, and wolde it al destroye. Abigayl deliverede Nabal hir housbond fro David the king, that wolde have i-slayn him, and appesede the ire of the kyng by hir witte, and by hir good counseilynge. Hester by good counseil enhaunsede gretly the poeple of God, in the regne of Assuerus the kyng. And the same bounté in good counseilyng of many a good womman maye men rede and telle. And moreover, whan oure Lord hadde creat Adam oure first fader, he sayde in this wise; Hit is not goode to be a man aloone; make we to him an help semblable to him-self. Here may ye se that if that a womman were not good, and hir counseil good and profytable, oure Lord God of heven wolde neither have wrought them, nor called them help of man, but rather con-

fusioun of man. And ther sayde oones a clerk in tuo versus, What is better than gold? Jasper. And what is better than jasper? Wisedom. And what is better than wisedom? Womman. And what is better than a good womman? No thing. And, sir, by many other resouns maye ye see, and many wommen ben goode, and eke there counseile goode and profitable. And therfore, if ye wil truste to my counseil, I shal restore you youre doughter hool and sound; and eek I wil doon you so moche, that ye shul have honour in this cause."

Whan Melibe had herd these wordes of his wif Prudens, he seide thus: "I see wel that the word of Salomon is soth; he seith, that the wordes that ben spoken discretly by ordinaunce been honycombes for thay geven swetnes to the soule, and holesomenesse to the body. And, wyf, bycause of thy swete wordes, and eek for I have assayed and proved thi grete sapiens and thi grete trouthe, I wil governe me by thy counseile in alle thinges."

"Now, sire," quod dame Prudens, "and syn ye vouchen sauf to be governed by my counseilyng, I wil enforme you how ye shul governe youre-self, in chesyng of youre counseil. Ye shul first in alle youre werkes mekely biseche to the high God, that he wol be your counseilour; and shape you to that entent that he give you counseil and confort, as taughte Toby his sone. At alle tymes thou shalt blesse God, and pray him to dresse thy wayes; and loke that alle thi counseiles be in him for evermore. Seint Jame eek saith: If eny of yow have neede of sapiens, axe it of God. And aftirward, thanne shul ye take counseil in youreself, and examine wel your thoughtes, of suche thinges as you thinkith that is best for youre profyt. And thanne shul ye dryve fro youre herte those thre thinges that ben contrarie to good counseil; that is to say, ire, coveytise, and hastynes. First, he that axeth counseil of himself, certes, he moste be withoute ire, for many cause. The first is this: he that hath gret ire and wrath in him-self, he weneth alwey he may do thing that he may not doo. And secoundly, he that is irous and wroth, he may not wel deme; and he that may not wel deme, may nought wel counseile. The thridde is this: that he that is irous and wroth, as saith Senec, may not speke but blameful thinges, and with his vicious wordes he stireth other folk to anger and to ire. And eek, sire, ye moste dryve coveitise out of youre herte. For thapostle saith that coveytise is

roote of alle harmes. And trust wel, that a coveitous man ne can not deme ne thinke, but oonly to fulfille the ende of his coveitise; and certes that may never ben accomplised; for ever the more abundaunce that he hath of riches, the more he desireth. And, sire, ye moste also dryve out of your herte hastynes; for certes ye maye nought deme for the beste a sodein thought that falleth in youre herte, but ye moste avyse you on it ful ofte. For as ye herde here biforn, the comune proverbe is this; that he that soone demeth, soone repentith. Sire, ye ben not alway in lik disposicioun, for certis som thing that som tyme semeth to yow that it is good for to doo, another tyme it semeth to you the contrarie. Whan ye have taken counseil in youre-selven, and have demed by good deliberacioun such thing as yow semeth best, thanne counsel I you that ye kepe it secré. Betreye nought youre counseil to no persone, but it so be that ye wene surely, that thurgh youre bytreyinge youre condicioun shal be to yow the more profytable. For Jhesus Syrac saith, Neither to thi foo nor to thi freend discovere not thy secre ne thy foly; for they wile give you audience and lokyng and supportacioun in thi presence, and scorn in thin absence. Another clerk saith, that skarsly shalt thou fynde eny persone that may kepe counseil secreely. The book saith: Whil thou kepist thi counsail in thin herte, thou kepest it in thi prisoun; and whan thou bytreyest thi counseil to any wight, he holdeth thee in his snare. And therfore yow is bettêr hyde your counseil in youre herte, than prayen him to whom ye have bytreyed youre counseil, that he wil kepe it clos and stille. For Seneca seith: If so be that thou maist not thin owne counseil hyde, how darst thou preyen any other wight thi counseil secreely to kepe? But natheles, if thou wene surely that thy bytreying of thy counseil to a persone wol make thy condicioun stonde in the better plite, thanne shalt thou telle him thy counseil in this wise. First, thou shalt make no semblaunt wher thee were rather werre or pees, or this or that; nor shewe him not thi wille and thin entent; for truste wel that comunly these counseilours ben flaterers, namely the counselours of grete lordes, for thay enforcen them alway rather to speke plesaunt wordes enclynyng to the lordes lust than wordes that be trewe and profytable. And therfore, men saye, that the riche man hath selden good counseil, but-if he have it of him-self. And after that thou shalt consider thy frendes and thy enemyes. And as touching thy frendes,

thou shalt consider which of them be most faithful and most wise, and eldest and most approved in counsaylinge; and of them shalt thou axe thy counsail, as the case requireth.

"I say, that first ye shul clepe to your counseil youre frendes that be trewe. For Salomon saith, that right as the hert of a man delitith in savour that is sweet, right so the counseil of trew frendes geveth swetnes to the soule. He saith also, ther may no thing be likened to the trew freend; for certes gold nor silver be nought so moche worth as the goode wil of a trew freend. And eek he sayde, that a trew frend is a strong defens; who that it fyndeth, certes he fyndeth a gret tresour. Thanne shul ye eek considere if that youre trew frendes be discrete and wyse; for the book saith, Axe thi counseil alwey of them that be wyse. And by this same resoun shul be clepe to youre counseil of youre frendes that be of age, such as have seen sightes and be expert in many thinges, and be approvyd in counseylinges. For the book saith, that in olde men is the sapience, and in longe tyme the prudence. And Tullius saith, that grete things be not ay accompliced by strengthe, nor by sleight of body, but by good counseil, by auctorité of persons, and by science; the whiche thre thinges been not feble by age, but certis thay enforce and encrese day by day. And thanne shul ye kepe this for a general rule. First shul ye clepe to youre counseil a fewe of youre frendes that be especial. For Salomon saith, Many frendes have thou, but among a thousand choose thee oon to be thy counseilour. For al be it so, that thou first telle thy counseil but to a fewe, thou mayst afterward telle it to mo folk, if it be neede. But loke alwey that thy counseilours have thilke thre condiciouns that I have sayd bifore; that is to saye, that thay be trew, and olde, and of wys experiens. And werke nought alwey in every need by oon counseilour alloone; for som tyme byhoveth it be counseiled by many. For Salomon saith, Salvacioun of thinges is wher there be many counseilors.

"Now since I have told yow of which folk ye shul be counseiled, now wille I telle yow which counseil ye ought eschewe. First, ye shal eschewe the counseil of fooles; for Salomon seith, Take no counseil of a fool, for he can not counseile but after his oune lust and his affeccioun. The book seith, that the propreté of a fool is this: he troweth lightly harm of every wight, and lightly troweth alle goodness in him-self. Thou shalt eschewe eek the counseil of alle flaterers, suche

as enforcen them rathere to prayse youre persone by flaterie, than for to telle yow the sothfastnesse of thinges. Wherfore Tullius saith, Amonges alle pestilences that be in frendshipe the grettest is flaterie. And therfore is it more neede that thou eschewe and drede flaterers, more than eny other peple. The book saith, Thou shalt rather drede and flee fro the swete wordes of flaterers, then fro the egre wordes of thy frend that saith thee thi true things. Salamon saith, that the wordes of a flaterer is a snare to cacche in innocents. He saith also, He that speketh to his frend wordes of swetnesse and of plesaunce, setteth a nette byfore his feet to cacchen him. And therfore saith Tullius, Encline not thin eeres to flaterers, ne tak no counseil of the wordes of flaterers. And Catoun saith, Avyse thee wel, and eschewe wordes of swetnes and of plesaunce. And eek thou shalt eschewe the counselyng of thin olde enemyes that be reconsiled. The book saith, that no wight retorneth safly into the grace of his olde enemyes. And Ysope saith, Trust not to them, with which thou hast had som tyme werre or enmyté, nor telle not them thy counseil. And Seneca telleth the cause why; it may not be, saith he, that wher a greet fyr hath longe tyme endured, that there remaineth not som vapour of hete. And therfore saith Salomon, In thin olde enemy truste thou nevere. For surely, though thin enemy be reconsiled, and make thee cheer of humilité, and lowteth to thee his heed, trust him never; for certes he makith thilke feyned humilité more for his profyt, than for eny love of thi persone; bycause he demyth to have victorie over thi persone by such feyned countynaunce, the whiche victorie he might nought have by stryf and werre. And Petir Alfons saith: Make no felashipe with thine olde enemyes, for if thou do them bounté, they wile perverten it into wikkednes. And eek thou most eschewe the counseilynge of them that ben thy servaunts, and beren thee gret reverence; for paraventure thai say it more for drede than for love. And therfore saith a philosophre in this wise: Ther is no wight parfytly trew to him that he too sore dredeth. And Tullius saith, Ther is no might so gret of eny emperour that longe may endure, but-if he have more love of the peple than drede. Thow shalt also eschewe the counseil of folk that be dronkelewe, for thay can no counseil hyde. For Salomon saith, Ther regneth no priveté where is dronkenesse. Ye shul also have in suspect the counseil of such folk as counseileth you ony thing prively, and counseile yow the con-

trarie openly. For Cassiodorie saith, It is a maner to hindre, whan he shewith to doon oon thing openly, and werkith prively the contrarie. Thou shalt also eschewe the counseil of wikked folkes; for the book saith, The counseilyng of wikked folk is alway ful of fraude. And David saith, Blisful is that man that hath not folwed the counseilyng of wikked men or shrewes. Thow shalt also eschewe the counseilynge of yonge folk, for there counseil is nought rype.

"Now, sire, syn I have shewed yow of what folk ye shul take youre counsail, and of whiche folk ye shullen eschewe the counseil, now shal I teche yow how ye shul examyne youre counseil after the doctrine of Tullius. In the examynyng of youre counseiloures, ye shul considre many thinges. Althirfirs ye shul considre that in thilke thing that thou proposist, and upon what thing thou wilt have counseil, that verray trouthe be sayd and considerid; this is to sayn, telle trewely thy tale, For he that saith fals, may not wel be counseled in that cas of which he lyeth. And after this, thou shalt considere the thinges that accorden to that purpos for to do by thy counseil, if resoun accorde therto, and eke if thy might may accorde therto, and if the more part and the better part of thy counseilours accorde therto or noon. Thanne shalt thou considere what thing shal folwe of that consailynge; as hate, pees, werre, grace, profyt, or damage, and many other thinges; and in alle these thinges thou shalt choose the beste, and weyve alle other thinges. Thanne shalt thou considre of what roote engendered is the matier of thy counseil, and what fruyt it may conceive and engendre. Thow shalt also consider al these causes, from whens thai ben sprongen. And whan ye have examined youre counseil, as I have said, and which party is the better and more profitable, and have approved by many wise folk and olde, than shalt thow considre, if thou maist parforme it and make of it a good ende. For resoun wol nought that any man shulde bygynne a thing, but-if he mighte parforme it and make therof a good ende; nor no wight shulde take upon him so hevy a charge, that he might not bere it. For the proverbe saith, He that moche embrasith destreyneth litel. And Catoun seith, Assay to do such thing as thou hast power to doon, lest that thy charge oppresse thee so sore, that it bihove thee to wayve thing that thou hast bygonne. And if so be that thou be in doute, whether thou maist parforme a thing or noon, choose rather to suffre than bygynne. And Petre

Alfons saith, If thou hast might to doon a thing, of which thou most repente, it is better nay than yee; this is to sayn, that thee is better holde thy tonge stille than to speke. Than may ye understonde by strenger resouns, that if thou hast power to parforme a werk, of which thou shalt repente, thanne is it better that thou suffre than bigynne. Wel seyn thay that forbid every wight to assaie thing of which he is in doute, whethir he may parforme it or noon. And after whan ye have examyned youre counseil, as I have sayd biforn, and knowen wel ye may parforme youre emprise, conferme it thanne firmly til it be at an ende.

"Now is it tyme and resoun that I shewe yow whanne, and wherfore, that ye maye chaunge youre counseil withouten reproef. Sothly, a man may chaunge his purpos and his counseil, if the cause cesseth, or whan a newe cause bytydeth. For the lawe seith, upon thinges that newely bityde, newe counseil bihoveth. And Seneca seith, If thy counseil be comen to the eeres of thin enemy, chaunge thy counsail. Thow maist also chaunge thy counseil, if so be that thou fynde that by errour, or by other processe, harm or damage may bytyde. Also thou chaunge thy counseil, if that it be dishonest, or elles cometh of dishonesté; for the lawes sayn, that alle the hestes that ben dishoneste ben of no valieu; and eek, if it so be that it be impossible, or may not goodly be parformed or kept. And take this for a general reule, that every counseil that is affermed or strengthed so strongly that it may not be chaunged for no condicioun that may bitide, I say that thilke counseil is wikked."

This Melibeus, whan he had herd the doctrine of his wyf dame Prudens, answerde in this wise. "Dame," quoth he, "yit as into this tyme ye have wel and covenably taught me, as in general, how I shal governe me in the choosynge and in the withholdynge of my counseiloures; but now wold I fayn ye wolde condescende as in especial, and telle me what semeth or how liketh yow oure counseiloures that we have chosen in oure present neede."

"My Lord," quoth she, "I byseke yow in al humblesse, that ye wile not wilfully repplye against my resouns, nor distempre youre herte, though I say or speke thing that yow displesith; for God wot that, as in myn entent, I speke it for youre beste, for youre honour, and for your profyt eek, and sothly I hope that your benignité wol take it into pacience. For truste me wel," quoth she, "that youre counseil as in

this case schulde not (as for to speke propurly) be called a counseilyng, but a mocioun or a movynge of foly, in which counseil ye have erred in many a sondry wise. First and forward, ye have erred in the gaderyng of youre counseilours; for ye shulde first have cleped a fewe folkes, if it hadde be neede. But certes ye have sodeinly cleped to your counseil a gret multitude of people, ful chargeous and ful anoyous for to hiere. Also ye have erred, for where ye shulde oonly have clepid to youre counseil youre trewe frendes, olde and wise, ye have i-cleped straunge folk, yonge folk, false flatereres, and enemyes reconsiled, and folk that doon yow reverence withoute love. Eke also ye have erred, for ye have brought with yow to youre counseil ire, coveitise, and hastynes, the whiche thre thinges ben contrarious to every counsail honest and profitable; the whiche thre thinges ye have nought destroyed, neyther in youre self nor in youre counseiloures, as ye oughte. Also ye have erred, for ye have shewed to youre counseilours youre talent and youre affeccioun to make werre, and for to doon vengeaunce anoon, and thay have espyed by youre wordes to what thinge ye ben enclined; and therfore have thay counseiled yow rather to youre talent than to youre profyt. Ye have erred also, for it semeth that yow sufficeth to have been counseiled by these counseilours only, and with litel avys, wher-as in so gret and so high a neede, it hadde be necessarious mo counseilours and more deliberacioun to parforme youre emprise. Ye have erred also, for ye have maked no divisioun bytwixe youre counsailours; this is to seyn, bitwix youre frendes and youre feyned counseilours; nor ye have nought i-knowe the wille of youre frendes, olde and wise, but ye have cast alle there wordes in an hochepoche, and enclyned youre herte to the more part and to the gretter nombre, and there be ye condescendid; and syn ye wot wel men shal alway fynde a gretter nombre of fooles than of wyse men, and therfore the counsailes that ben at congregaciouns and multitudes of folk, ther as men taken more reward to the nombre than to the sapience of persones, ye se wel that in suche counseilynges fooles have maystrie."

Melibeus answerde agayn and sayde: "I graunte wel that I have erred; but there as thou hast told me to-forn, that he is nought to blame that chaungeth his counseilours in certeyn cases, and for certeyn juste causes, I am al redy to chaunge my counseilours right as thou wilt devyse. The

proverbe saith, that for to do synne is mannysch, but certes for to persevere longe in synne is werk of the devyl."

To this sentence anoon answerde dame Prudens, and saide: "Examine," quoth she, "youre counsail, and let us see which of them hath spoke most resonably, and taught you best counsail. And for as moche as the examinacioun is necessarie, let us byginne at the surgiens and at the phisiciens, that first speken in this matiere. I say you that the surgiens and the phisiciens have sayd yow in youre counseil discretly, as them ought; and in there speche sayden ful wisely, that to the office of hem appendith to doon to every wight honour and profyt, and no wight to annoy, and after there craft to do gret diligence unto the cure of them which that thay have in there governaunce. And, sire, right as thay answerde wisely and discretly, right so rede I that they be highly and soveraignly guerdoned for there noble speche, and eek for they shullen do the more ententyf besynes in the curyng of youre doughter dere. For al be it so that thai be youre frendes, therfore shul ye nought suffre that thay schul serve yow for nought, but ye oughte the rathere to guerdoune them and shewe them youre largesse. And as touchynge the proposicioun whiche the phisiciens have shewed you in this caas, this is to sayn, that in maladyes oon contrarie is cured by another contrarie, I wolde fayn knowe thilke text and how thay understonde it, and what is youre entente." "Certes," quod Melibeus, "understonden it is in this wise; that right as thay have done me a contrarie, right so shold I do them another; for right as thay have venged them on me and doon me wrong, right so shal I venge me upon them, and doon them wrong; and thanne have I cured oon contrarie by another." "Lo, lo," quoth dame Prudence, "how lightly is every man enclyned to his oune plesaunce and to his oune desir! Certes," quoth she, "the wordes of the phisiciens shulde nought have ben understonde sone in that wise; for certes wikkednesse is no contrarie to wickednesse, nor vengauns to vengeaunce, nor wrong to wrong, but thai ben semblable; and therfore on vengeaunce is nought cured by another vengeaunce, nor oon wrong by another wrong, but everych of them encreseth and engreggith other. But certes the wordes of the phisiciens shul ben understonde in this wise; for good and wikkednesse ben tuo contraries, and pees and werre, vengeaunce and sufferaunce, discord and accord, and many other thinges; but, certes, wikkednes shal be cured

by goodnesse, discord by accord, werre by pees, and so forth of other thinges. And herto accordith seint Paul the apostil in many places; he saith, Yeld nought harm for harm, nor wikked speche for wikked speche; but do wel to him that doth the harm, and blesse him that seith the harme. And in many other places he admonisheth pees and accord. But now wil I speke to yow of the counseil, which was given to yow by the men of lawe, and the wise folk, and the olde folke, that sayde alle by oon accord as ye have herd byfore, that over alle thinges ye shal do youre diligence to kepe youre persone, and to preserve youre house; and seyden also, that in this yow aughte for to wirche ful avysily and with gret deliberacioun. And, sire, as to the firste poynt, that touchede to the kepinge of youre persone, ye shul understonde, that he that hath werre, shal evermore devoutly and mekely prayen biforn alle thinges, that Jhesu Crist wil of his mercy have him in his protecciouu, and ben his soverayn helpyng at his neede; for certes in this world ther is no wight that may be counseiled or kept sufficauntly, withoute the kepinge of oure lord Jhesu Crist. To this sentence accordeth the prophete David, that seith: If God kepe not the citee, in vain wakith he that kepith hit. Now, sire, thanne shul ye committe the keping of youre persone to youre trewe frendes, that ben approved and y-knowe, and of them shul ye axen help, youre persone to kepe. For Catoun saith: If thou have neede of help, axe it of thy freendes, for ther is noon so good a phisicien at neede as is a trewe frend. And after this than shal ye kepe you fro alle straunge folkes, and fro lyeres, and have alway in suspect there compainye. For Pieres Alfons saith: Take no compaignie in the way of a straunge man, but so be that thou knowe him of a lenger tyme; and if so be he falle into thy compaignye peraventure withouten thin assent, enquere thanne, as subtilly as thou maist, of his conversacioun, and of his lyf bifore, and feyne thy way, and say that thou wilt go thider as thou wolt nought goon; and if he bere a spere, hold the on the right syde, and if he bere a swerd, holde the on the left syde. And so after this, thanne shul ye kepe you wisely from al such peple as I have sayd bifore, and them and there counseil eschiewe. And after this, thanne shul ye kepe yow in such manere, that for eny presumpcioun of youre strengthe, that ye despise not the might of youre adversarie so lite, that ye lete the kepinge of youre persone for youre presumpcioun; for every wis man

dredeth his enemy. And Salomon saith, Wel is he that of alle hath drede; for certes he that thurgh hardynes of his herte, and thurgh the hardinesse of himself, hath too gret presumpcioun, him shal evyl bitide. Thanne shal ye evermore counterwayte embusshements and alle espial. For Senec saith, that the wise man that dredith harmes, eschieweth harmes, nor fallith into noone perils, that perils eschieweth. And al be it so that the seme that thou art in sure place, yit shalt thou alway do thy diligence in kepyng of thy persone; this is to saye, be not negligent to kepe thy persone, nought oonly fro thy gretteste enemyes, but fro thy lest enemyes. Senec saith: A man that is wel avysed, he dredith his lest enemy. Ovide seith, that the litel wesil wol sle the grete bole and the wilde hert. And the book saith, a litel thorn wol prikke a king ful sore, and an hound wol holde the wilde boore. But natheles, I say not that ye shul be so moche a coward, that ye doute where is no neede or drede. The book saith, that som folk have gret lust to diceyve, but yit thay dreden them to be deceyved. Yet shal ye drede to ben empoisoned. And kepe the fro the companye of scorners; for the book saith, with scorners make no compainye, but flee them and there wordes as venym.

"Now as to the secounde poynt, where as youre wise counseilours warnede yow to preserve youre hous with gret diligence, I wolde fayn wite how that ye understoode thilke wordes, and what is your sentence." Melibeus answerde and saide: "Certes, I understonde it in this wise, that I shal preserve myn hous with toures, suche as have castiles and other maner edifices, and armure, and artilries; by suche thinges I may my persone and myn hous so kepen and edifien and defenden, that myn enemyes shul be in drede myn hous to approche."

To this sentence answerde dame Prudence: "Warmstorynge," quoth she, "of heihe toures and grete edifices, is with grete costages and grete travaile; and whan that thay ben accomplised, yit beth thay nought worth a straw, but-if they be defended by trewe frendes, that be olde and wise. And understond that the grettest strength or garnisoun that the riche man may have, as well to kepe his persone as his goodes, is that he be biloved by his subjects and with his neighebours. For thus saith Tullius, that ther is a maner garnisoun that no man may vanquisshe nor discomfite, and that is a lord to be biloved with his citezeins and of his peple.

"Now thanne as to youre thridde poynt, where as youre olde and wyse counseillours sayde, ye oughte nought sodeinly nor hastily procede in this neede, but that ye oughte purveyen yow and apparaile yow in this case with greet diligence and gret deliberacioun; trewely, I trowe, that thay sayden soth and right wisely. For Tullius saith: 'In every nede, ere thou bigynne it, apparaile thee with gret diligence.' Thanne say I, that in vengeance takinge, in werre, in bataile, and in warmstoringe of thin hous, ere thou bygynne, I rede that thou apparaille thee therto, and do it with gret deliberacioun. For Tullius saith, that long apparaylyng byfore the bataille maketh short victorie. And Cassidorus saith, the garnisoun is strenger whan it is long tyme avysed.

"But now let us speke of the counseil that was accorded by youre neighebours, suche as doon you reverence withoute love, youre olde enemyes recounsiled, youre flatereres, that counseile yow certeyn thinges pryvely, and openly counseile yow the contrarie, the yonge also, that counsaile yow to make werre and venge yow anoon. And certes, sire, as I have sayd byforn, ye have gretly erred to have cleped such maner folk to youre counseil, whiche be now repreved by the resouns byfore sayd. But natheles let us now descende to the purpos special. Ye shul first procede after the doctrine of Tullius. Certes, the trouthe of this matier or this counseil nedeth nought diligently enquere, for it is wel wist whiche it ben that doon to yow this trespas and vilonye, and how many trespasoures, and in what maner thay have to yow doon al this wrong and al this vilonye. And after that shul ye examyne the secounde condicioun, which Tullius addith therto in this matier. Tullius put a thing, which that he clepeth consentynge; this is to sayn, who ben thay, and whiche ben thay, and how many that consentide to this matiere, and to thy counsail in thy wilfulnesse, to do hasty vengeaunces. And let us considere also who ben those, and how many ben those, that consentiden to youre adversaries. And certes, as to the first poynt, it is wel known whiche folk ben thay that consentide to youre first wilfulnes. For trewly, alle those that counsaillede yow to make sodeyn werre, be nought youre frendes. Let us considre whiche ben those that ye holde so gretly youre frendes, as to youre persone; for al be it so that ye be mighty and riche, certes ye be alloone; for certes ye have no childe but a doughter, nor ye have no bretheren, nor cosins germayns, nor noon other nigh

kyndrede, wherfore that youre enemyes for drede shulden stynte for to plede with you, and destroy youre persone. Ye knowe also, that youre richesses mooten in divers parties be departed; and whan every wight hath his part, thay wol take but litel reward to venge thy deth. But thyne enemyes ben thre, and have many children, bretheren, cosynes, and othere nigh kyndrede; and though it so were ye hadde slayn of hem tuo or thre, yet dwellen there y-nowe to venge there deth and sle thi persone. And though so were that youre kyndrede were more sure and stedefast than the kyndrede of youre adversaries, yit natheles youre kyndrede nis but a fer kyndrede, and litel sib to yow, and the kyn of youre enemyes ben nigh sibbe to them. And certes, as in that, there condicioun is bet than youres. Thanne let us considere also if the counseilynge of them that counseilede yow to take sodein vengeance, whethir it accorde to resoun. And certes, ye knowe wel, nay; for as by right and resoun, ther may no man take vengeaunce upon no wight, but the judge that hath juredicciouu of it, whan it is y-graunted him to take thilke vengeaunce hastily, or attemperelly, as the lawe requireth. And yit moreover of thilke word that Tullius clepith consentynge, thou shalt considre, if thy might and thy power may consente and suffice to thy wilfulnes and to thy counseilours. And certes, thou maist wel saye, that nay; for certainly, as for to speke properly, we maye doo no thing but oonly oon thing which we maye do rightfully; and certes rightfully maye ye take no vengeance, as of youre owne auctorité. Than may ye see that youre power consentith not, nor accordith not, with youre wilfulnesse.

"Let us now examyne the thridde poynt, that Tullius clepeth consequente. Thou shalt understonde, that the vengeance that thou purposiddest for to take, is consequent, and thereof folweth another vengeaunce, peril, and werre, and other damages withoute nombre, of whiche we be not war, as at this tyme. And as touching the fourthe poynt, that Tullius clepeth engendrynge, thou shalt considre that this wrong which that is doon to thee, is engendred of the hate of thin enemyes, and of the vengeaunce takinge up that wolde engendre another vengeaunce, and moche sorwe and wastyng of riches, as I sayde. Now, sire, as to the poynt that Tullius clepith causes, whiche that is the laste poynt, thou shalt understonde that the wrong that thou hast receyved hath certeyn causes, whiche that clerkes calle *oriens*,

and *efficiens*, and *causa longinqua*, and *causa propinqua*, this is to saye, the far cause, and the nigh cause. For the far cause is almighty God, that is cause of alle thinges; the nere cause is thi thre enemyes; the cause accidental was hate; the causes material been the fyve woundes of thy doughter; the cause formal is the maner of there werkyng, that brought in laddres and clombe in at thin wyndowes; the cause final was for to sle thy doughter; it failed nought in as moche as was in them. But for to speke of the fer cause, as to what ende thay shal come, or what shal finally betyde of them in this cause, can I not deme, but by conjectinge and by supposyng, for we shul suppose, that thay shul come to a wikked ende, bycause that the book of Decrees saith: Selden, or with gret peyne, ben causes i-brought to a good ende, whan thay ben evyl bygonne.

"Now, sire, if men wolde axe me, why that God suffrede men to do yow this wrong and vilonye, certes I can not wel answere, as for no sothfastnes. For the apostil saith, that the sciences and the judgements of oure Lord God almyghty ben ful deepe, ther may no man comprehende ne serchen them sufficiauntly. Natheles, by certeyn presumpciouns and conjectinges, I holde and bilieve, that God, which that is ful of justice and of rightwisnesse, hath suffred this to betyde, by juste cause resonable. Thy name, Melibe, is to say, a man that drynketh hony. Thou hast y-dronke so moche hony of sweete temperel richesses and delices and honours of this world, that thou art dronke, and hast forgot Jhesu Crist thy creatour; thou hast not doon him such honour and reverence as thee oughte to doone, nor thou hast nought wel taken keep to the wordes of Ovide, that saith, Under the hony of thy goodes of thy body is hid the venym that sleeth thi soule. And Salamon saith, If thou have founde hony, ete of it that sufficeth; for if thou ete of it out of mesure, thou shalt spewe, and be nedy and povere. And peraventure Crist hath thee in despit, and hath torned away fro thee his face and his eeres of misericorde; and also he hath suffred that thou hast ben punysshed in the maner that thou hast i-trespassed. Thou hast doon synne ageinst oure Lord Crist, for certes the thre enemyes of mankinde, that is to saye, thy flessche, the feend, and the world, thou hast y-suffred them to entre into thin herte wilfully, by the wyndow of thy body, and hast nought defended thiself sufficiently agayns ther assautis, and there temptaciouns, so

that they have woundid thi soule in fyve places, this is to sayn, the dedly synnes that ben entred into thin herte by thy fyve wittes; and in the same maner oure Lord Crist hath wolde and suffred, that thy thre enemyes ben entred into thin hous by the wyndowes, and have i-wounded thi doughter in the forsayde maner."

"Certes," quoth Melibeus, "I see wel that ye enforce yow moche by wordes to overcome me, in such manere, that I shal not venge me on myn enemyes, shewynge me the perils and the yveles that mighten falle of this vengeaunce. But whoso wolde considre in alle vengeaunces the periles and the yveles that mighten folwe of vengeaunces takynge, a man wolde never take vengeaunce, and that were harm; for by vengeaunce takynge be wikked men destruyed and dissevered fro the goode men. And thay that have wille to wikkednes, restreinen ther wikked purpos, whan thay seen the punysshyng and the chastisyng of trespasours.

"And yit say I more, that right so as a sengle persone synneth in taking of vengeaunce, right so the judge synneth if he doo no vengeaunce on him that it hath deserved. For Senec saith thus: That maister, he saith, is good that reproveth shrewes. And as Cassoder saith: A man dredeth to doon outrage, whan he woot and knoweth that it displeseth to the judges and the soveraynes. And another saith: The judge that dredeth to demen right, maketh shrewes. And seint Poul thappostoil saith in his epistil, whan he writeth to the Romayns: The judges bere not the spere withoute cause, but thay beren it to punysshe the shrewes and mysdoers, and for to defende with the goode men. If ye wol take vengeaunce on youre enemyes, ye shal retourne or have recours to the judges, that have jurediccioun upon them, and he shal punissche them, as the law axeth and requireth." "Ah!" quoth Melibeus, "this vengeaunce liketh me no thing. I bythenke me now, and take heed, how Fortune hath norisshed me fro my childhode, and hath holpe me to passen many a strayt passage; now wol I aske her that she shal, with Goddes help, helpe me my shame for to venge."

"Certes," quoth Prudence, "if ye wil wirche by my counseil, ye shul not assaye Fortune by no maner way, nor ye shul not lene ne bowe unto hire, after the word of Senec; for thinges that beth follyly done, and that be done in hope of Fortune, shul never come to good ende. And as the same

Senek saith: The more cleer and the more shynynge that Fortune is, the more brutil, and the sooner breketh she. So trust nought in hire, for she is nought stedefast nor stable: for when thou wenest or trowest to be most seur of hir help, she wol fayle and deceyve thee. And wher as ye saye, that Fortune hath norisshed yow fro youre childhode, I say that in so moch ye shul the lasse truste in hire and in hire witte. For Senek saith: What man that is norisshed by Fortune, she maketh him a gret fool. Now since ye desire and axe vengeaunce, and the vengeaunce that is doon after the lawe and beforne the judge liketh yowe nought, and the vengeaunce that is doon in hope of Fortune, is perilous and uncerteyn, thanne have ye noon other remedye, but for to have recours unto the soveraigne judge, that vengith alle vilonies and wronges; and he shal venge yow, after that himself witnesseth, where as he saith: Leve the vengeaunce to me, and I shal yelde it." Melibeus answerd: "If I venge me nought of the vilonye that men have doon unto me, I shal somne or warne them that han doon to me that vilonye, and alle othere, to doo me another vilonye. For it is writen: If thou tak no vengeaunce of an old vilonye, thou somnest thin adversarie do thee a newe vilonye. And also, for my suffraunce, men wolde do me so moche vilonye, that I mighte neither bere it ne susteyne it; and so shulde I be put over lowe. For men say, in moche sufferynge shal many thinges falle unto thee, whiche thou shalt nought be able to suffre." "Certes," quoth Prudence, "I graunte yow wel, that over mochil suffraunce is nought good, but yit folwith it nought thereof, that every persone to whom men doon vilonye, take of it vengeaunce. For it appertieneth and longeth al oonly to the judges, for thay shul venge the vilonyes and the injuries; and therfore the auctoritees that ye have sayd above been oonly understonden in the judges; for whan thay suffre too moch the wronges and the vilonyes that ben doon withoute punysshyng, thay somne not a man oonly to doo newe wronges, but thay comaunde hit. Also the wise man saith: The judge that correcteth not the synnere, comaundith and byddith him doon another synne. And the judges and sovereignes mighten in there lond so moch suffren of the shrewes and mysdoeres, that thay shulde by such suffraunce, by proces of tyme, wexen of such power and might, that thay shulde put out the judges and the sovereignes from there places, and atte laste do them lese there lordshipes.

But lete us now putte, that ye have leve to venge yow; I say ye ben nought of might nor power as now to venge you; for if ye wolde make comparisoun as to the might of youre adversaries, ye shulde fynde in many thinges, that I have i-shewed yow ere this, that there condicioun is bettre than youres, and therfore say I, that it is good as now, that ye suffre, and be pacient.

" Forthermore ye knowe wel that after the comune sawe, it is a madnesse, a man to stryve with a strenger or a more mighty man than himselven is; and for to stryve with a man of evene strengthe, that is to saye, with as strong a man as he is, it is peril; and for to stryve with a weykere, it is a folye; and therfore shulde a man fle stryvynge as moche as he mighte. For Salamon seith: it is a gret worshipe, a man to kepe him fro noyse and stryfe. And if it so bifalle or happe that a man of gretter might and strengthe than thou art do the grevaunce, studie and busye the rather to stille the same grevaunce, than for to venge thee. For Senec saith, he putteth him in a gret peril that stryveth with a gretter man than he him selven is. And Catoun saith: If a man of heiher estat or degré, or more mighty then thou, do thee anoye or grevaunce, suffre him; for he that hath oones don thee a grievaunce, may another tyme relieve thee and helpe thee.

" Yit sette I a case, ye have bothe might and licence for to venge yow, I say ther ben ful many thinges that shulde restreine yow of vengeaunce takynge, and make yow to encline to suffre, and to have pacience of the wronges that have ben doon to yow. First and forward, ye wol considre the defaultes that ben in youre owne persone, for whiche defaultes God hath suffred yow to have this tribulacioun, as I have sayd yow herbyfore. For the poete saith, We oughten paciently to suffre the tribulacioun that cometh to us, whan that we thenken and consideren, that we have deserved to have them. And seint Gregorie saith, that whan a man considereth wel the nombre of his defaultes, and of his synnes, the peynes and the tribulaciouns that he suffereth semen the lasse unto him. And in as moche as him thenkith his synnes the more hevy and grevous, in so moche his peyne is the lighter and the more esier unto him. Also ye oughten to encline and bowe youre herte, to take the pacience of oure Lord Jhesu Christ, as saith seint Peter in his Epistles. Jhesu Christ, he seith, hath suffred for us, and given ensample unto every man to folwe him; for he ded never synne, ne never

cam a vileyns worde out of his mouth. Whan men cursed him, he cursed them not; and whan men beete him, he menased them not. Also the gret pacience which that seintes that ben in Paradys have had in tribulaciouns that thay have had and suffred withoute desert or gilt, oughte moche to stire you to pacience. Forthermore, ye shul enforce yow to have pacience, consideringe that the tribulaciouns of this world but litel while enduren, and soon passed ebn and goon, and the joye that a man secheth to have by pacience in tribulaciouns is durable; after that the apostil seith in his Epistil: the joye of God, he saith, is durable, that is to say, evermore lastynge. Also trow and biliev stedefastly, that he is not wel norished and taught, that can nought have pacience, or wil nought receyve pacience. For Salamon saith, that the doctrine and the witte of a man is i-knowe by pacience. And in another place he seith: He that hath pacience governeth him by gret prudence. And the same Salamon seith, that the wrathful and the angry man maketh noyses, and the pacient man attempereth and stilleth him. He seith also: It is more worth to be pacient than for to be right strong. And he that may have his lordshipe of his oune herte, is more worth and more to preise than he that by his force and by his strengthe taketh grete citees. And therfore saith seint Jame in his Epistil, that pacience is a gret vertu of perfeccioun."

"Certes," quoth Melibe, "I graunte yowe, dame Prudence, that pacience is a grete vertue of perfeccione; but every man may not have the perfeccioun that ye seekyn, nor I am not of the nombre of right parfyte men; for myn herte may never be in pees, unto the tyme it be venged. And al be it so, that it was a gret peril to myne enemyes to don me a vilonye in takinge vengeaunce upon me, yit tooken thay noon heede of the peril, but fulfilden there wikked desir and their corrage; and therfore me thenketh men oughten nought repreve me, though I putte me in a litel peril for to venge me, and though I do a gret excesse, that is to saye, that I venge oon outrage by another."

"A!" quoth dame Prudence, "ye saye youre wille and as yow likith; but in noon case in the world a man schulde nought doon outrage nor excesse for to venge him. For Cassidore saith, as evel doth he that avengith him by outrage, as he that doth the outrage. And therfore ye shul venge yow after the ordre of right, that is to sayn, by the lawe, and nought

by excesse, nor by outrage. And also if ye wile venge yow of the outrage of youre adversaries, in other maner than right comaundeth, ye synnen. And therefore saith Senec, that a man shal never venge shrewednes by shrewednes. And if ye saye that right axeth a man to defende violence by vyolence, and fightyng by fightynge; certes, ye saye soth, whan the defence is doon anoon withouten intervalle, or withouten taryinge or dilay, for to defenden him, and nought for to venge him. And it bihoveth a man putte such attemperance in his defence, that men have no cause ne matiere to repreven him that defendith him, of excesse and outrage. Pardé! ye knowe wel, that ye make no defence as now for to defende yow, but for to venge yow; and so semeth it, that ye have no wille to do youre wille attemperelly; and therfore me thenkith that pacience is good. For Salamon saith, that he that is not pacient shal have gret harm." "Certes," quoth Melibeus, "I graunte you wel, that whan a man is inpacient and wroth of that that toucheth him nouht, and that that apperteineth nouht to him, thouh it harme him it is no wondere. For the lawe saith, that he is coupable that entremettith him or mellith him with such thing, as aperteyneth not unto him. Dan Salamon saith, He that entremetteth him of the noyse or stryf of another man, is lik him that takith the straunge hound by the eeres; for right as he that takith a straunge hound by the eeres is other while biten by the hound, right in the same wise, it is resoun that he have harm, that by his impacience melleth him of the noise of another man, where it apperteyneth not to him. But ye shul knowe wel, that this dede, that is to sayn, myn disease and my grief, toucheth me right nigh. And therfore, though I be wroth, it is no mervayle; and (savynge your grace) I can not see that it mighte gretly harme me, though I toke vengeaunce, for I am richer and more mighty than myne enemyes been; and wel knowe ye, that by money and by havynge of grete possessiouns, ben alle the thinges of this world governede. And Salamon saith, that alle thinges obeyen to moneye."

Whan Prudence had herd hir husbonde to avaunten him of his riches and of his monye, and dispreisynge the power of his adversaries, then she spak and sayde in this wyse: "Certes, deere sire, I graunte yow that ye ben riche and mighty, and that richesse is good to them that wel have geten it, and that wel conne use it. For right as the body of a man may not

be withoute the soule, no more may a man lyve withoute temperel goodes, and by richesse may a man gete him greet frendshipe. And therfore saith Pamphilles: If a neet-hurdes doughter, he saith, be riche, she may choose of a thousand men, which she wol take to hir housbonde; for of a thousand men oon wil not forsake hir nor refuse hire. And this Pamphilles seith also: If thou be right happy, that is to sayn, if thou be right riche, thanne shalt thou fynde a gret nombre of felawes and frendes; and if thy fortune chaunge, that thou waxe pore, fare wel frendshipe, for thou shalt ben aloone withouten eny companye, but if it be the compainye of pore folk. And yit saith this Pamphillus moreover, that they that ben thral and bonde of linage, shullen ben maad worthy and noble by richesse. And right so as by richesse ther come many goodes, right so by povert comen ther many harmes and yvels; for grete poverté constreyneth a man to done mony yvels. And therfore clepeth Cassidore povert the moder of ruyne, that is to sayn, the moder of overthrowyng or fallynge doun. And therfore seith Pieres Alphons: Oon of the grettest adversites of this world, is whan a freeman by kyn or burthe is constreined by povert to eten the almes of his enemyes. And the same seith Innocent in oon of his bookes, that sorweful and unhappy is the condicioun of a povere begger, for if he axe nought his mete, he deyeth for hungir, and if he axe, he deyeth for shame; and algates the necessité constreineth hym to axe. And therfore saith Salamon, that bettre it is to deye, than to have such povert. And as the same Salamon saith; Bettir is to deye on bitter deth, than for to lyve in such a wyse.

"By these resouns that I have sayd unto yow, and by many another resoun that I knowe and coude say, I graunte yow that richesses be goode to them that gete them wel, and to them that them wel usen; and therfore wol I shewe yow how ye shulde bere yow in getyng of riches, and in what maner ye shulde use them. First, ye shulde gete them withoute gret desir, by good leysir, gently, and nought over hastily; for a man that is too desirynge for to gete riches, abandoneth him first to thefte and to alle othere yveles. And therfore saith Salamon: He that hastith him too bisyly to waxe riche, shal be noon innocent. He saith also, that the riches that hastily cometh to a man, soone and lightly goth and passeth fro a man, but that richesse that cometh alway litel and litel, waxeth alway and multiplieth. And, sire, ye shal

gete richesse by youre witte, and by youre travayle, unto youre profyt, and that withoute wrong or harm doynge to eny other persone. For the lawe saith, that no man maketh himself riche, that doth harm to another wight; that is to saye, that nature defendeth and forbedith by right, that no man make him-self riche unto the harm of another persone. Tullius saith, that no sorwe nor drede of deth, nor no thing that may falle to a man, is so moche ageinst nature, as for a man to encrese his oune profyt to the harm of another man. And though the grete men and riche men gete richesse more lightly than thou, yit shalt thou not be ydil nor slowe to thy profyt, for thou shalt in alle wise flee ydilnes. For Salamon saith, that ydelnesse techith a man to do many yveles. And the same Salamon saith, that he that travaileth and besieth him to til the lond, shal ete the breed; but he that is ydil, and casteth him to no busynesse ne occupacioun, shal falle into povert, and deye for hunger. And he that is ydel and slough, can never fynde him tyme for to do his profyt. For ther is a versifiour saith, the ydel man excuseth him in wynter, because of the grete colde, and in somer by enchesoun of the grete hete. For these causes, saith Catoun, wake, and encline yow nought over moche for to slepe, for over moche reste norisheth and causeth many vices. And therfore saith seint Jerom: Do some goode deedes, that the devel, which that is oure enemy, ne fynde yow unoccupied; for the devel takith not lightly unto his werkes suche as he fyndeth occupied in goode werkes. Thanne thus in getynge of riches ye moot flee ydelnesse. And afterward ye shul use the richesses, the whiche ye have geten by youre witte and by youre travaile, in such a maner, that men holde yow not skarce nor too sparynge, nor too fool large, that is to say, over large a spender. For right as men blamen an averous man, bycause of his skarseté and chyncherie, in the same manere is he to blame, that spendeth over largely. And therfore saith Catoun: Use, he saith, thi richesses that thou hast y-geten in such a manere, that men have no mater nor cause to calle thee neither wrecche ne chynche; for it is gret shame to a man to have a pover herte and a riche purse. He saith also: The goodes that thou hast i-geten, use them by mesure, that is to saye, spende them mesurably; for thay that folily wasten and spenden the goodes that thay have, whan thay have no more propre of here oune, thay shape them to take the goodes of another man. I say thanne ye

shul flee avarice, usynge your richesse in such manere, that men say nouht that youre richesse be buried, but that ye have them in youre might and in youre weldynge. For the wise man reproveth the averous man, and saith thus in tuo versus: Wherto and why burieth a man his goodes by his gret avarice, and knowith wel, that needes most he deye, for deth is the ende of every man, as in this present lif? And for what cause or enchesoun joyneth he him, or knetteth him so fast unto his goodes, that alle his wittes may nought dissever him, or departe him fro his goodes, and knowith wel, or oughte knowe wel, that whan he is deed, he shal no thing bere with him out of this world? And therfore seith seint Austyn, that the averous man is likned unto helle, that the more that it swolwith, the more it desireth to swolwe and devoure. And as wel as ye wolde eschewe to be cleped an averous man or chinche, as wel shulde ye kepe yow and governe yow, in such a wise, that men clepe yow nought fool large. Therfore saith Tullius: The goodes, he saith, of thin hous shulde nought be hidde ne kepte so clos, but that thay might be opened bu pité and by kindness; that is to sayn, to give them part that have gret neede; nor thy goodes shul not be so open, to be every mannes goodes.

" Aftirward, in getynge of youre richesses, and in usynge them, ye shul alway have thre thinges in youre herte, that is to say, oure lord God, conscience, and good name. First, ye shul have God in youre herte, and for no riches ye shul in no manere doo no thing which mighte displese God that is your creatour and youre maker. For after the word of Salamon, it is better to have litil good with love of God, than to have mochil good and tresor, and lose the love of his lord God. And the prophete saith: Better is to be a good man, and have litel good and tresore, than to be holden a shrewe, and have gret riches. And yit say I forthermore, that ye shuln alway doon youre businesse to gete yow riches, so that ye gete them with good conscience. And the apostil seith, ther is nothing in this world of which we shuln have so gret joye, as whan oure conscience bereth us good witnes. And the wise man seith: The substaunce of a man is ful good, whan synne is not in his conscience. Afterward, in getynge of youre richesses, and in usynge of them, thou most have gret busynesse and gret diligence, that youre good name be alway kept and conserved. For Salamon saith: Better it is, and more aveilith a man, for to have a good name, than for

to have get riches. And therfore he saith in another place: Do gret diligence, saith Salamon, in kepynge of thy frend, and of thy good name, for it shal lenger abyde with thee, than eny tresor, be it never so precious. And certes, he shulde nought be cleped a gentil man, that after God and good conscience, alle thinges left, doth not his diligence and busynesse to kepe his good name. And Cassidore saith, that it is signe of a good man and a gentil, or of a gentil herte, whan a man loveth or desireth to have a good name. And therfore saith seint Augustyn, that ther be tuo thinges that be necessarie and needful; and that is good conscience and good name; that is to sayn, good conscience in thin oune persone in-ward, and good name of thin neghebor out-ward. And he that trusteth him so moche in his good conscience, that he despiseth and settith at nought his good name or loos, and rekketh nought though he kepe not his good name, is but a cruel churl.

"Sire, now have I shewed yow how ye shulde doon in getyng of good and riches, and how ye shulde use them; I see wel that for the trust that ye have in youre riches, ye wolde move werre and bataile. I counseile yow that ye bygynne no werre in trust of youre riches, for thay suffisen not werres to mayntene. And therfore saith a philosophre: That man that desireth and wol algate have werre, shal never have sufficeaunce; for the richere that he is, the gretter dispense most he make, if he wol have worshippe or victorie. And Salamon saith: The gretter riches that a man hath, the mo despendours he hath. And, deere sire, al be it so that for youre riches ye may have moche folk, yit byhoveth it not nor it is not good to bygynne werre, when ye may in other maner have pees unto youre worshipe and profyt; for the victorie of batailles that be in this world, lith not in gret nombre or multitude of poeple, nor in vertu of man, but it lith in the wille and in the hond of oure lord God almighty. And Judas Machabeus, which was Goddes knight, whan he shulde fighte ageinst his adversaries, that hadde a gretter nombre and a gretter multitude of folk and strengere than was the poeple of this Machabe, yit he reconforted his litel poeple, and sayde ryght in this wise: As lightly, quoth he, may oure lord God almighty give victory to fewe folk, as to mony folke; for the victorie of batailles cometh nought by the grete nombre of poeple, but it cometh fro oure lord God of heven. And, dere sire, for as moche as ther is no man

certeyn, if it be worthi that God give him victorie or nought, after that that Salamon saith, therfore every man shulde gretly drede werres to bygynne. And bycause that in batailles falle many mervayles and periles, and happeth other while, that as soone is the grete man slayn as the litel man; and, as it is written in the secounde book of Kynges, the deedes of batayles be aventurous, and no thing certeyn, for as lightly is oon hurt with a spere as another; and for ther is gret peril in werre, therfore shulde a man flee and eschewe werre in as moche as a man may goodly. For sothly Salamon saith: He that loveth peril, shal falle in peril."

After that dame Prudens hadde spoke in this maner, Melibe answerde and sayde: "I see wel, dame, that by youre faire wordes and by youre resouns, that ye have shewed me, that the werre liketh yow no thing; but I have not yit herd youre counseil, how I shal doo in this neede." "Certes," quoth she, "I counseile yow that ye accorde with youre adversaries, and that ye have pees with them. For seint Jame saith in his Epistles, that by concord and pees, the smale ryches wexen grete, and by debaat and discord the gret richesses fallen doun. And ye knowe wel, that oon of the moste grettest and soveraign thinges that is in this world, is unité and pees. And therfore saith oure lord Jhesu Crist to his aposteles in this wise: Wel happy and blessed be thay that loven and purchacen pees, for thay ben called children of God." "A!" quoth Melibe, "now see I wel, that ye loven not myn honour, ne my worshipe. And ye knowe wel that myne adversaries have bygonne this debate and quarrel by there outrage, and ye see wel that thay require nor praye me not of pees, nor thay askyn nought to be recounseild; wol ye thanne that I goo and meke me unto them, and crie them mercy? For sothe that were not my worshipe; for right as men seyn, that over gret pryde engendreth dispisyng, so fareth it by to gret humbleté or mekenes." Thanne bygan dame Prudence to make semblant of wrath, and sayde: "Certes, sire, save youre grace, I love youre honour and youre profyt as I doo myn owne, and ever have doon; ye may noon other seyn; and yit if I hadde sayd, ye sholde have purchaced pees and the reconciliacioun, I hadde not moche mystake in me, or seyd amys. For the wise man saith: The discencioun bigynneth by another man, and the reconsilynge bygynneth by thyself. And the prophete saith: Flee shame and shrewednesse and doo goodnesse;

seeke pees and folwe it, as moche as in thee is. Yet seith he not, that ye shul rather pursewe to youre adversaries for pees, than thei shul to yow; for I knowe wel that ye be so hard herted, that ye wil doo no thing for me; and Salamon saith: He that is over hard-herted, atte laste he shal myshappe and mystyde."

Whan Melibe hadde seyn dame Prudence make semblaunce of wrath, he sayde in this wise: "Dame, I pray yow that ye be not displesed of thinges that I say, for ye know wel that I am angry and wroth, and that is no wonder; and thay that be wroth, wot not wel what thay doon, nor what thay saye. Therfore the prophete saith, that troublit eyen have no cleer sight. But saye and counsiale me forth as yow likeb, for I am redy to doo right as ye wol desire. And if ye reprove me of my folye, I am the more holde to love yow and to prayse yow. For Salamon saith, that he that reproveth him that doth folie, he shal fynde gretter grace than he that deceyveth him by swete wordes." Thanne sayde dame Prudens: "I make no semblant of wrath nor of anger, but for youre grete profyt. For Salamon saith: He is more worth that reproveth or chydeth a fool for his folie, shewynge him semblant of wrath, than he that supporteth him and prayseth him in his mysdoyng and laugheth at his folie. And this same Salamon saith afterward, that by the sorweful visage of a man, that is to sayn, by sory and hevy countenaunce of a man, the fool correcteth himself and amendeth." Thanne sayde Melibeus: "I shal not conne answere to so many faire resouns as ye putten to me and shewen; saye shortly your wille and youre counseil, and I am al redy to fulfille and parfourme it."

Thanne dame Prudence discovered al hire counsail and hire wille unto him and sayde: "I counseil yow," quoth she, "above alle thinges, that ye make pees bitwen God and yow, and be reconsiled unto him and to his grace; for as I have sayd yow herbiforn, God hath suffred yow have this tribulacioune and disease for youre synnes; and if ye do as I say yow, Gow wol sende youre adversaries unto yow, and make them falle, at youre feet, al ready to doo youre wille and youre comaundment. For Salamon saith: Whan the condicioun of man is plesant and likyng to God, he chaungeth the hertes of the mannes adversaries, and constreineth them to biseke him of pees and of grace. And I pray yow let me speke with youre adversaries in privé place, for thay shul not knowe

it by youre wille or youre assent; and thanne, whan I knowe there wille and there entent, I may counseile yow the more seurly."

"Dame," quoth Melibeus, "do youre wille and youre likyng, for I putte me holly in youre disposicioun and ordinaunce." Thanne dame Prudence, whan she saw the good wille of hir housbond, she delibered and took avis by hirself, thenkynge how she mighte bringe this neede unto good conclusioun and to a good ende. And whan she saw hir tyme, she sente for these adversaries to come unto hire into a privé place, and shewed wysly unto them the grete goodes that comen of pees, and the grete harmes and perils that be in werre; and sayde to them, in goodly manere, how that they aughte to have gret repentaunce of the injurie and wrong that thay hadde doon to Melibe hire lord, and unto hire and hire doughter. And whan thay herden the goodly wordes of dame Prudence, they were so surprised and ravysshed, and hadden so gret joye of hire, that wonder was to telle. "A! lady," quoth thay, "ye have shewed unto us the blessyng of swetnes, after the sawe of David the prophete; for the recounsilyng, which we be nought worthy to have in no manere, but we oughten require it with gret contricioun and humilité, ye of youre grete goodnes have presented unto us. Now we see wel, that the science of Salamon is ful trewe: he saith, that swete wordes multplien and encrescen frendes, and maken shrewes to be debonaire and meke. Certes," quoth thay, "we putten oure deede, and al oure matier and cause, al holly in youre good wille, and be redy to obeye to the speche and to the comaundement of my lord Melibe. And therfore, deere and benigne lady, we praye yow and byseke yow, as meekely as we conne and maye, that it like to yowre grete goodnes to fulfille in deede yowre goodliche wordes. For we considere and knowleche wel that we have offended and greved my lord Melibe out of resoun and out of mesure, so ferforth that we ben nought of power to make him amendes; and therfore we oblige us and bynde us and oure frendes, for to do al his wille and his comaundementz. But peradventure he hath such hevynes and such wrath to usward, bycause of oure offence, that he wol enjoyne us such peyne as we mowe not bere nor susteyne; and therfore, noble lady, we biseke to youre wommanly pité to take such avysement in this neede, that we, nor oure frendes, be not disherited and destroyed thurgh

oure folye." "Certes," quoth dame Prudence, "it is an hard thing, and right a perilous that a man put him al utterly in the arbitracioun and judgement and the might and power of his enemyes. For Salamon saith: Beleeve me and give credence to that that I shal say: I say, quoth he, ye poeple, ye folke, and ye governours of holy chirche, to thy sone, to thi wyf, to thy frend, to thy brother, geve thou never might nor maystry of thy body, whil thou lyvest. Now, since he forbiddeth that a man shulde not give to his brother, nor to his frend, the might of his body, by a strenger resoun he defendeth and forbedith a man to give his body to his enemye. But natheles, I counseile yow that ye mystruste nought my lord; for I wot wel and knowe verraily, that he is debonaire and meke, large, curteys, and no thing desirous nor coveytous of good nor richesse: for ther is no thing in this world that he desireth, save oonly worshipe and honour. Forthermore I knowe, and am right seure, that he wol no thing doo in this neede withoute counsail of me; and I shal so worche in this cause, that by the grace of oure lord God ye shul be recounsiled unto us." Thanne sayde thay, with oon voys: "Worshipful lady, we putte us and oure goodes al fully in youre wille and disposicioun, and ben redy to come, what day that it like yow and unto youre noblesse to limite us or assigne us, for to make oure obligacioun and bond, as strong as it liketh to youre goodnes, that we mowe fulfille the wille of yow and of my lord Melibe." Whan dame Prudence had herd the answeres of thise men, she bad hem go agayn pryvely, and she retournede to hir lord Melibe, and tolde him how she fond his adversaries ful repentant, knowlechinge ful lowely there synnes and trespasses, and how thay were redy to suffre alle peyne, requiring and praying him of mercy and pité.

Thanne saide Melibeus, "He is wel worthy to have pardoun and foryevenes of his synne, that excusith not his synne, but knowlecheth and repentith him, axinge indulgence. For Senek saith: Ther is the remissioun and forgevenesse, wher as the confessioun is; for confessioun is neighbor to innocence. And he saith in another place, He that hath shame of his synne, knowlechith it. And therfore I assente and conferme me to have pees, but it is good that we doo it nought withoute assent and the wille of oure frendes." Thanne was Prudence right glad and jolyf, and sayde: "Certes, sire," quoth she, "ye ben wel and goodly avysed;

for right as by the counsail and assent and help of youre frendes, ye have to be stired to venge yow and make werre, right so withoute there counseil shul ye nought acorde yow ne have pees with youre adversaries. For the lawe saith: "Ther nys no thing so good by way of kinde, as thing to be unbounde by him that it was bounde." And thanne dame Prudence, withoute delay or taryinge, sente anoon messageres for here kyn and for here olde frendes, whiche that were trewe and wyse; and tolde them by ordre, in the presence of Melibe, of this matier, as it is above expressed and declared; and praide them that thay wolde give there avys and counseil what best were to doon in this matiere. And whan Melibeus frendes hadde take there avys and deliberacioun of the forsayde matier, and hadden examyned it by greet besynes and gret diligence, they gate him ful counsail to have pees and reste, and that Melibeus shulde with good hert receyve his adversaries to forgivenes and mercy.

And whan dame Prudence had herd thassent of hir lord Melibeus, and counseil of his frendes accorde with hire wille and hire entencioun, she was wonderly glad in herte, and sayde: "Ther is an olde proverbe that saith, the goodnesse that thou maist do this day abyde not nor delaye it nough unto to morwe; and therfore I counseile yow ye sende youre messageres, whiche that be discrete and wise, unto youre adversaries, tellynge them on youre bihalve, that if thay wol trete of pees and of accord, that thay shape them withoute dilay or taryinge to come unto us." Which thing was parformed in dede; and whan these trespasours and repentynge folk of there folies, that is to sayn, the adversaries of Melibe, hadden herd what the messangeres sayden unto them, thay were right glad and jolif, and answerden ful mekely and benignely, yeldynge graces and thankinges to there lord Melibe, and to al his compainye; and prepared them without delay to go with the messangeres, and obeye them to the comaundement of there lord Melibe. And right anoon thay token there way to the court of Melibe, and token with them some of there trewe frendes, to make faith for them, and for to ben there sureties. And whan thay were comen to the presence of Melibeus, he seyde them thise wordes: "It stondith thus," quoth Melibeus, "and soth it is, that ye causeles, and withouten skile and resoun, have doon gret injuries and wronges to me, and to my wyf Prudence, and to my doughter also, for ye have entred into

myn hous by violence, and have doon such outrage, that alle men knowe welle that ye have deserved the deth; and therfore wil I knowe and wite of yow, whether ye wol putte the punyschment and the chastisement and the vengeaunce of this outrage, in the wille of me and of my wyf, dame Prudence, or ye wil not." Thanne the wisest of them thre answerde for hem alle, and sayde: "Sire," quoth he, "we knowe wel, that we be unworthy to come to the court of so gret a lord and so worthy as ye be, for we have so gretly mystake us, and have offendid and giltid in such a wise ageins youre highe lordshipe, that trewely we have deserved the deth. But yit for the greete goodnes and debonaireté that al the world witnesseth of youre persone, we submitten us to the hihe excellence and benignité of youre gracious lordshipe, and be redy to obeye to alle youre comaundements, bisekynge yow that of youre merciable pité ye wol considre oure grete repentaunce and lowe submissioun, and graunte us forgivenes of oure outrage, trespas, and offence. For wel we knowen, that youre liberal grace and mercy strechen forthere into goodnesse than doth oure outrage, gilt, and trespas, into wikkednes; al be it that cursedly and damnably we have offended ageinst youre highe lordshipe." Thanne Melibe took them up fro the ground ful benignely, and receyved there obligaciouns, and there bondes, by there othes upon there pledges and sureties, and assigned them a certeyn day to retourne unto his court for to accepte and receyve the sentence and judgement that Melibe wolde comaunde to be doon on hem, by these causes aforn sayde; which thing ordeyned, every man retourned home to his hous. And whan that dame Prudence saw hire tyme, she axed hire lord Melibe, what vengeance he thoughte to take upon his adversaries. To which Melibeus answerd and saide: "Certes," quoth he, "I thenke and purpose me fully to disherite them of al that ever thay have, and for to putte hem in exil for evermore."

"Certes," quod dame Prudence, "this were a cruel sentence, and moche ageinst resoun. For ye ben riche y-nough, and have noon neede of other mennes good; and ye mighte lightly gete yow a coveitous name, which is a vicious thing, and oughte to be eschewed of every man; for after the sawe of thapostil, covetise is roote of alle harmes. And therfore it were bettre for yow to lose so moche good of youre oune, than for to take of there good in this manere. For bettir it

is to lose good with worshipe, than it is to wynne good with vilonye and shame. And every man oughte to do his diligence and his busynesse, to gete him a good name. And yit shal he not only besy hym is kepynge of his gode name, but he shulde also enforce him alway to do som thing, by which he way renew his good name; for it is writen, that the olde goode name of a man is soone done or goon and passed, whan it is not newed ne renoveled. And as touchinge that ye sayn, that ye wol exile youre adversaries, that thinketh me moche ageinst resoun, and out of mesure; considerith the power that thay have given to yow upon there body and on them-self. And it is writen, that he is worthy to lose his privelege, that mysuseth the might and the power that is geve to him. And yit I sette the caas, ye mighte enjoyne them that peyne by right and lawe (which I trowe ye mowe nought do), I say, ye mighte nought putte it to execucioun peraventure, and thanne were it likly to torne to the werre, as it was biforn. And therfore if ye wol that men do yow obeissaunce, ye moste deme more curteisly, that is to sayn, ye moste yive more esyere sentence and judgement. For it is writen: He that most curteysly comaundeth, to him men most obeyen. And therfore I pray yow, that in this necessité and in this neede ye caste yow to overcome youre herte. For Senek saith, he that overcometh his herte, overcometh twyes. And Tullius saith: Ther is no thing so comendable in a gret lord, as whan he is debonaire and meeke, and appesith him lightly. And I pray yow, that ye wol forbere now to do vengeaunce, in such a manere, that youre goode name may be kept and conserved, and that men mowe have cause and matiere to prayse yow of pité and of mercy, and that ye have noon cause to repente yow of thing that ye doon. For Senec saith: He overcometh in an evel manere, that repenteth him of his victorie. Wherfore I pray you let mercy be in youre herte, to theffect and thentent, and God almighty have mercy and pité upon yow in his laste judgement. For seint Jame saith in his Epistil: judgement withoute mercy shal be doon to him, that hath no mercy upon another wight."

Whan Melibe had herd the grete skil and resouns of dame Prudens, and hir wys informacioun and techynge, his herte gan enclyne to the wille of his wyf, consideryng hir trewe entent, conformed him anoon and consented fully to werke after hir reed and counseil, and thankid God, of whom procedeth al goodnes, that him sente a wif of so gret discrecioun.

And whan the day cam that his adversaries shulden appere in his presence, he spak to them ful goodly, and sayde in this wise: "Al be it so, that of youre pryde and high presumpcioun and folye, and of youre negligence and unconnynge, ye have mysborne yow, and trespassed unto me, yit forasmoche as I see and biholde youre humilité, that ye be sory and repentaunt of youre giltes, it constreineth me to do yow grace and mercy. Wherfore I receyve yow to my grace, and forgeve you outerly alle the offenses, injuries, and wronges, that ye have don to me and agayns me and myne, to this effect and to this ende, that God of his endeles mercy wole at the tyme of oure dyinge forgive us oure giltes, that we have trespased to him in this wrecchid world; for douteles if we be sory and repentaunt of the synnes and giltes whiche we have trespassed inne in the sight of oure lord God, he is so free and so merciable, that he wil forgive us oure giltes, and bringe us to the blisse that never hath ende." Amen.

THE MONKES TALE

When ended was my tale of Melibee,
And of Prudence and hir benignitee,
Oure Hoste sayde, "As I am faithful man,
And by the precious corpus Madryan
I hadde rather than a barel ale
That good womán my wyf had herd this tale.
For she is no thing of such pacience
As was this Melibeus wyf Prudence.
By Goddes boones! whan I bete my knaves,
She bringeth me forth the grete clobbèd staves,
And crieth, "sley the dogges everyone!
And breke of them the bak and eek the bone!"
And if that eny neighebour of myne
Wil nought unto my wyf in chirche inclyne,
Or be so hardy to hir to trespáce,
Whan she comth hom, she rampeth in my face,
And crieth, "false coward, avenge thy wyf!
By corpus bones! I wil have thy knyf,
And thou shalt have my distaf and go spynne."
Fro day to night right thus she wil bygynne;

" Allas!" she saith, " that ever I was i-shape,
To wedde a mylk-sop or a coward ape,
That wil be over-lad with every wight!
Thou darst nought stonde by thy wyves right."
This is my lif, unless that I wil fight;
And out at dore anon I must me dight,
And else I am al lost, but-if that I
Be, lik a wilde lion, fool-hardy.
I wot wel she wil make me sley som day
Som neighebor, and thanne runne away.
For I am perilous with knyf in honde,
Al be it that I dar not hir withstonde.
For she is big in armes, by my faith!
That shal he fynde that hire mysdoth or saith.
But let us passe away fro this matére.
My lord sir monk," quoth he, " be mery of chere,
For ye shal telle a tale trewely.
Lo, Rowchestre here standeth faste bu.
Ryde forth, myn oune lord, brek nought oure game!
But, by my trothe, I knowe not youre name;
Whether shal I calle you my lord dan John,
Or dan Thomas, or else dan Albon?
Of what hous be ye, by your fader kyn?
I vow to God thou hast a ful fair skyn!
It is a gentil pasture where thou gost;
Thou art not like a penitent or goost.
Upon my faith, thou art an officer,
Som worthy sexteyn, or some celerer;
For, by my fader soule, as in my doom,
Thou art a maister whan thou art at hoom,
No poore cloysterer, nor no novys,
But a góvernour a wily and a wys;
And therwithal of brawne and eek of bones
A wel faryng persóne for the nonce.
I praye God give him confusioun,
That first thee broughte to religioun!
Thou woldist have been a gret lover aright;
Haddist thou as gret leve as thou hast might.
Allas! why werest thou so wyd a cope?
God gif me sorrow! if I were a pope,
Nought only thou, but every mighty man,
Though he were shorn al broade upon his pan,

Shuld have a wif; for al this world is lorn;
Religioun hath taken up al the corn
Men sowen, and we comon men be shrympes;
Of feble trees ther cometh feble ympes.
But be nought wroth, my lorde, though I play,
Ful oft in game a soth, I have herd say."

This worthy Monk took al in pacience,
And saide, " I wil do al my diligence,
Als fer as soundeth into honestee,
To telle you a tale, or tuo or three;
And if you list to herken hider-ward,
I wil yow saye the lif of seint Edward,
Or else first tragedis wil I you telle,
Of which I have an hundred in my celle.
Tragedis is to sayn a certeyn storie,
As olde bookes maken us memorie,
Of them that stood in greet prosperitee,
And are y-fallen out of high degree
To miserie, and endith wrecchedly;
And thay be versifyèd comunly
Of sixe feet, which men clepe examétron.
In prose be endited many oon;
In metre eek, in mony a sondry wise;
Lo, this declaryng ought y-nough suffise.
Now herkne, if you likith for to heere;
But first I you biseche in this matére,
Though I by ordre telle not thise thinges,
Be it of popes, emperours, or kynges,
After their age, as men may writen fynde,
But telle them som bifore and som byhynde,
As it now cometh to my rémembraúnce,
Have me excusèd of myn ignoraunce.

" I wil bywaile, in maner of tragedye,
The harm of them that stood in high degree,
And fallen so ther is no remedye
To bring them out of their adversitee;
For certeynly, whan fortune list to flee,
Ther may no man the cours of hir wheel holde;
Let no man truste in blynd prosperitee,
Be war by these ensamples trewe and olde."

LUCIFER

At Lucifer, though he an angil be,
And noght a man, at him wil I bygynne;
For though fortune may non aungel slee,
From high degre yit fel he for his synne
Doun into helle, wher as he yet is inne.
O Lucifer! brightest of aungels alle,
Now art thou Sathanas, thou maist nought wynne
Out of the miserie in which thou art falle.

ADAM

Lo Adam, in the feld of Damassene
With Goddes oune fynger wrought was he,
And nought bigeten of mannes seed unclene,
And had al paradys, savyng oon tree.
Hadde never worldly man suche a degree
As Adam, til he for mysgovernance
Was dryven out of high prosperitee,
To labour, and to helle, and to meschaunce.

SAMSON

Lo Samson, whiche that was annunciate
By the angel, long ere his nativitee,
And was to God Almighty consecrate,
And stood in noblesse whil that he mighte see.
Was never such another as was he,
To speke of strength, and therto hardynesse;
But to his wyfes told he his secree,
Thurgh which he slew himself for wrecchidnesse.
Samson, this noble and myhty champioun,
Withouten wepon save his hondes tueye,
He slew and al to-rente the lyoún
To-ward his weddynge walkinge be the waie.
The false wif coude him wel plese and preie
Til she his counseile knewe, and she, untrewe,
Unto his foos his counsel gan betreye,
And him for-soke, and toke another newe.
Thre hundred foxis took Samson for ire,

And alle their tayles he togider bond;
And sette the foxes tailes alle on fyre,
For he in every tail hath knyt a brond;
And thay brent alle the cornes of that lond,
And alle their olyves and their vynes eeke.
A thousand men he slew eek with his hond,
And hadde no wepon but an asses cheeke.
Whan thay were slayn, so thursted him that he
Was wel nigh ded, for which he gan to preye
That God wolde of his peyne have som pitee,
And send him drynk, and else most he deye.
And out of this asses cheke, that was so dry,
Out of a side-toth sprong anon a welle,
Of which he dronk ynough, shortly to seye;
Thus halp him God, as Judicum can telle.
By verray fors at Algason, on a night,
In spite of Philistiens of that citee,
The gates of the toun he hath up plight,
And on his bak carièd them hath he,
High on an hil, wher al men might them see.
O noble almighty Samson, leef and deere,
Haddest thou nought to wommen told thy secree,
In al the world hadde not been thy peere.
This Samson neyther cyder dronk nor wyn,
Nor on his heed com rasour noon ne shere,
By precept of the messager divyn,
For alle his strengthes in his heres were.
And fully twenty wynter, yer by yere,
He hadde of Israel the governaunce.
But soone shal he wepe many a teere,
For wymmen shal him bringe to meschaunce.
Unto his lemman Dalida he tolde
That in his heres al his strengthe lay;
And falsly to his foomen she him solde,
And slepyng in hir bosom upon a day
She made to clippe or shere his heres away,
And made his foomen al his craft espien.
And whan thay found him in this weak array,
They bound him fast, and put out bothe his eyen.
But ere his heer was clippèd or i-shave,
Ther was no bond with which men might him bynde;

But now is he in prisoun in a cave,
Ther as thay made him at the mille grynde.
O noble Samson, strengest of al mankynde!
O whilom judge in glory and in richesse!
Now mayst thou wepe with thine eyen blynde,
Since thou fro wele art falle in wrecchednesse!
Thend of this caytif was, as I shal say,
His foomen made a fest upon a day,
And made him as there fool bifor them play;
And this was in a temple of gret array;
But atte last he made a foul affray.
For he two pilers shook, and made them falle,
And doun fel temple and al, and ther it lay,
And slew himsilf and eek his fomen alle;
That is to sayn, the princes every one;
And eek thre thousand bodies were ther slayn
With fallyng of the grete temple of stoon.
Of Samson now wil I no more sayn;
Be war by these ensamples, olde and playn,
That no man telle his counseil to his wyf,
Of such thing as he wold have secret fayn,
If that it touche his limbes or his lif.

DE ERCULE

Of Ercules, the sovereyn conquerour,
Singen his werkes laude and high renoun;
For in his tyme of strength he bar the flour.
He slew and rafte the skyn fro the lioún;
He of Centaures layde the boast adoun;
He Arpies slew, the cruel birddes felle;
The gold appul he raft fro the dragoún;
He drof our Cerbures the hounde of helle;
He slew the cruel tyrant Buserus,
And made his hors to eat him flesh and boon;
He slew the verray serpent venemous;
Of Achiloyus tuo hornes he raft oon;
He slew Cacus within a cave of stoon;
He slew the geaunt Anteus the stronge:
He slew the grisly bore, and that anon;
And bar the hevene upon his necke longe.
Was never wight, since the world bigan,
That slew so many monstres as dede he;

Thurghout the wide world his name ran.
What for his strengthe and for his highe bountee,
And every realme went he for to see;
He was so strong, ther might no man him lette.
At bothe the worldes endes, as saith the Trophe,
In stede of boundes he a piler sette.
A lemman hadde this noble champioun,
That hightè Dejanire, fressh as May;
And as these clerkes maken mencioun,
She hath him sent a shirte fresh and gay.
Alas! this shirt, allas and wailaway!
Envenymèd was subtily withalle,
That ere he hadde wered it half a day,
It made his flesh al from his bones falle.
But nontheles som clerkes hir excusen,
That oon that hightè Nessus, had it makyd.
Be as be may, I wil nought hir accusen;
But on his bak he wered this shirt al nakyd,
Til that his flesh was for the venym blackèd.
And whan he saw no other remedye,
In hotè coles he hath himself i-rakèd;
For with no venym deignèd him to dye.
Thus died this mighty and worthy Ercules.
Lo! who may trustè fortune eny throwe?
For he that folweth al this world of press,
Ere he be war, is oft y-layd ful lowe.
Ful wys is he that can himselven knowe!
Be war, for whan that fortune list to glose,
Than waytith she hir man to overthrowe,
By suchè way as he wolde least suppose.

DE REGE NABUGODONOSOR

The mighty trone, the precious tresór,
The glorious sceptre and royal magestee,
That hadde the king Nabúgodónosóre,
With tongè scarce may descryved be.
He twycè won Jerusalem that citee;
The vessel out of the temple he with him ladde;
At Babiloynè was his sovereyn see,
In which his glorie and his delyt he hadde.
The fairest children of the blood roial
Of Israel he captive took anoon,

And made each of them for to be his thral;
Amonges othre Daniel was oon,
That was the wisest child of everyoon;
For he the dremes of the king expounèd,
When in Chaldea was ther clerkes noon
That wiste to what end his dremes sounded
This proude king let make a statu of gold,
Sixty cubites long and seven in brede,
To which ymáge bothe yonge and olde
Comaunded he to love and have in drede,
Or in a fornays ful of flames red
He shulde be brent that wolde not obeye.
But never wolde assente to that dede
Danyel nor his yonge felawes twey.
This king of kinges proud was and elate;
He wende God that sit in majestee
Never might him bireve of his estate.
But sodeynly he left his dignitee,
I-lik a beast him semèd for to be,
And eet hay as an oxe, and lay ther-oute
In rayn, with wilde bestes walkyd he,
Til certein tyme was i-come aboute.
And lik an eglis fetheres were his heres,
His hondes like a briddes clowes were,
Til God relessèd him a certeyn yeres.
And gaf him witte, and thanne with many a tere
He thanked God, and ever he is in fear
To do amys or more to trespáce.
And ere that tyme he layd was on his bere,
He knew wel God was ful of might and grace.

BALTHAZAR

His sone, which that highte Balthazar,
That held the realm after his fader day,
He by his fader coude nought be war,
For proud he was of hert and of array;
And eek an ydoláster was he ay.
His high astate assurèd him in pryde;
But fortune cast him doun, and ther he lay,
And sodeynly his realme gan divide.
A fest he made unto his lordes alle
Upon a tyme, and made them blithe be;

And than his officeres gan he calle,
" Go, bringeth forth the vesseles," quoth he,
" The which my fader in his prosperitee
Out of the temple of Jerusalem byrafte;
And to oure hihe goddis thanke we
Of honours that oure eldres with us lafte!"
His wif, his lordes, and his concubines
Ay dronken, whiles their rioting did last,
Out of this noble vessels sondry wynes.
And on a wal this king his eyen cast,
And saw an hond armless, that wrot ful fast;
For fere of which he quoke and sighèd sore.
This hond, that Balthazar so sore agast,
Wrot, MENE, TEKEL, PHARES, and no more.
In al the lond magicien was ther non
That coude expounde what this lettre ment,
But Daniel expoundith it anon,
And sayde, " King, God to thy fader sent
Glori and honour, realm, tresor, and rent;
And he was proud, and nothing God ne dredde,
And therfor God gret vengeaunce on him sent,
And him biraft the realme that he hadde.
" He was out cast of mannes compainye,
With asses was his habitacioun,
And ate he hay in wet and eek in drye,
Til that he knew by grace and by resoún
That God of heven hadde dominacioún
Over every realm and every créatúre;
And than hadde God of him compassioun,
And him restored to his realm and his figúre.
" Eke thou that art his sone art proud also,
And knowest al this thing so verrayly,
And art rebél to God and art his fo;
Thou dronk eek of his vessel boldely,
Thy wyf eek and thy wenches sinfully
Dronke of the same vessel sondry wynes;
And praisest falsé goddes cursedly;
Therfore to thee shapen ful grete pain is.
" This hond was sent from God, that on the wal
Wrot, MENE, TEKEL, PHARES, truste me.
Thy realm is doon, thou weyist nought at al;
Divided is thy realm, and it shal be

To Meedes and to Perses geven," quoth he.
And thilke same night, the king was slawe,
And Dárius occupièd his degree,
Though therto neyther had he right nor lawe.
Lordyngs, ensample here-by may ye take,
How that in lordship is no surenesse;
For when fortune wil a man forsake,
She bereth away his realm and his richesse,
And eek his frendes bothe more and lesse.
And what man hath from frendes the fortúne,
Mishap wil make them enemyes, I gesse;
This proverbe is ful sothe and ful comune.

ZENOBIA

Cenobia, of Pálmire the queene,
As writen Perciens of hir noblesse,
So worthy was in armes and so keene,
That no wight passèd hir in hardynesse,
Nor in lynáge, nor other gentilesse.
Of the kinges blood of Pers she is descendid;
I say not that she hadde most fairnesse,
But of hir shap she might not be amendid.
From hir childhood I fynde that she fledde
Office of wommen, and to woode she wente,
And many a wilde hertes blood she shedde
With arrows brode that she to them sente;
She was so swyft, that she anon them hente.
And when that she was elder, she wolde kille
Leoúns, lepards, and beres al to-rente,
And in hir armes hold them at hir wille.
She dorste wilde bestes dennes seke,
And runnen in the mounteyns al the night,
And slepe under a bussh; and she coude eeke
Wrastille by verray fors and verray might
With eny yong man, were he never so wight.
Ther mighte no thing in hir armes stonde.
She kept hir maydenhed from every wight;
To no man deynèd hir for to be bounde.
But atte last hir frendes have hir maried
To Odenake, a prince of that citee,
Al were it so that she him longe taried.
And ye shal understonde how that he

Hadde suche fantasies as hadde she.
But nontheles, whan thay wedded were,
Thay lyved in joye and in felicitee;
To ech of them was the other leef and deere.
Tuo sones by this Odenak had she,
The which she kept in vertu and honoúr.
But now unto our purpos torne we;
I say, so worshipful a créatúre,
And wys, therwith, and large with mesúre,
So stedfast in the werre and curteys eeke,
Nor more labour might in fight endure,
Was nowher noon in al this world to seeke.
Hir riche array, if it might be y-told,
As wel in vessel as in hir clothing,
She was al clothèd in jewels and in gold;
And eek she lafte nought for hir huntyng
To have of sondry tonges ful knowing;
Whan she hadde leyser and might therto entende,
To lerne bookes was al hir likyng,
How she in vertu might hir lif despende.
And shortly of this story for to trete,
So doughty was hir housbond and eek she,
That they have conquered many realmes grete
In thorient, with many a fair citee
Appurtenant unto the magestee
Of Rome, and with strong hond helden hem faste;
Nor never might their fomen make them flee
Ay while that Odenakes dayes last;
Her batails, who-so lust them for to rede,
Agaynst Sapor the king and other mo,
And how that this processe fel in dede,
Why she conquéred, and what title hadde therto,
And after of hir meschief and hir woo,
How that she was besegèd and i-take,
Let them unto my mayster Petrark go,
That writeth of this y-nough, I undertake.
Whan Odenake was deed, she mightily
The realmes held, and with hir propre hond
Ageinst hir foos she faught ful trewely,
There was not king nor prince in al that lond

That was not glad if he that grace fond
That she wold not upon his lond warraye.
With hir thay made their alliaunce by bond,
To be in peese, and let hir ryde and play.
The emperour of Rome, Claudius,
Nor him bifore the Romayn Galiene,
He dorste never be so córrageous,
Nor noon Ermine, nor Egipciene,
No Surrien, nor noon Arrabiene
Withinne the feld that durste with hir fight
Lest that she wolde them with her hondes sleen,
Or with hir armee putten them to flighte.
In kinges habyt went hir sones tuo,
As heires of their fadres realmes alle;
And Hérmanno and eek Themáleo
Their names were, as Parciens them calle.
But ay fortune hath in hir hony galle;
This mighty queene may no while endure,
Fortune out of hir realme made hir falle
To wrecchednesse and to mysádventure.
Aurilian, whan that the governaunce
Of Rome cam into his hondes tway,
He thought him on this queen to do vengeaunce;
And with his legiouns he took the way
Toward Cenoby; and shortly for to say
He made hir flee, and atte last hir hente,
And feterid hir, and eek hir children tweye,
And won the lond, and home to Rome he wente.
Amonges other thinges that he wan,
Hir car, that shon with gold and ivory,
This grete Romayn, this Aurilian,
Hath with him lad, for that men shulde see;
Bifore this triumphe walkith she,
And gilte cheynes in hir necke hongynge;
Corounèd she was, as aftir hir degree,
And ful of jewels chargid was hir clothynge.
Allas! fortune! she that whilom was
Dredful to many a king and emperour,
Now gazeth al the pepul on hir, alas!
And she that helmyd was in strong vizór,
And won bi force many a toune and toure,
Shal on hir heed now were a kerchief gray;

And she that bar the scepter and the power,
Shal bere a distaf hir coste for to paye.

DE PETRO HISPANNIE REGE

O noble, O worthi Petro, glori of Spayne,
Whom fortune held so high in majestee,
Well oughte men thy piteous deth complayne;
Thy bastard brother made thee to flee,
And after, at a siege, by subtiltee
Thou were bytrayèd, and lad to his tent,
Wher as he with his oune hond slew thee,
Succedyng in thy lond and in thy rent.
The feld of snow, with the eagle of blak therinne,
Caught by the lioun, like furnace coloured rede,
He brewède al the cursednesse and synne,
The Wikked Nest was werker of this neede.
No warlike Oliver that ay took heede
Of trouthe and honour, but of Brittany
Genilon Oliver, córruptid for mede,
Broughte this worthy king thro for to dye.

DE PETRO CIPRE REGE

O worthy Petro king of Cipres, also,
That Alisaunder won by high maistrýe,
Ful many an hethen wroughtest thou ful wo,
Of which thin oune lieges had envýe;
And for no thing but for thy chivalrie,
Thay in thy bed have slayn thee by the morwe.
Thus can fortune the wheel governe and gye,
And out of joye bringe men into sorwe.

DE BARNABO COMITE MEDIOLANO

Of Melayn grete Barnabo Viscount,
God of delyt and scourge of Lumbardye,
Why shuld thyn infortúne I nought accounte,
Synce in estaat thou clomben were so hye?
Thy brother sone, that was thy double allie,
For he thy nevew was and sone in lawe,
Withinne his prisoun made thee to dye;
But none know why or how thou wer y-slawe.

DE HUGILINO COMITE PISE

Of Hugilin of Pise the langour
Ther may no tonge telle for pitee.
But litel out of Pise stant a tour,
In whiche tour in prisoun put was he;
And with him be his litel children three,
The eldest skarsly fyf yer was of age;
Allas! fortúne! it was gret crueltee
Suche briddes for to put in such a cage.
Damnyd he was to deye in that prisoun,
For Roger, which that bisshop was of Pise,
Had on him made a fals suggestioun;
Thurgh which the peple gan on him arise,
And putten him in prisoun in such wise
As ye have herd, and mete and drynk he hadde
So smal that scarce wel it may suffise,
And therwithal it was ful pore and badde.
And on a day bifel that in that hour
Whan that his mete was wont to be i-brought,
The gayler shut the dores of that tour.
He herd it wel, but yit he saw it nought,
And in his hert anon ther fel a thought
That thay for hungir wolde doon him dyen.
"Alas!" quoth he, "allas! that I was wrought!"
Therwith the teeres felle fro his eyen.
His yongest sone, that three yer was of age,
Unto him sayde, "Fader, why do ye wepe?
Whan wil the gayler bringen oure potáge?
Is ther no morsel bred that ye do kepe?
I am so hongry that I may not sleepe.
Now wolde God that I might slepen ever!
Than shulde not hunger in my wombe crepe.
Ther is no thing save bred that me were lever."
Thus day by day this child bigan to crie,
Til in his fadres bosom adoun he lay,
And sayde, "Far wel, fader, I must dye!"
And kist his fader, and dyde the same day.
And whan the fader him not helpen may,
For wo his armes tuo he gan to byte,
And sayde, "Fortúne, alas and waylaway!
Their false wiles to my wo I wyte."

His childer wende that it for hongir was,
That he his armes gnawed, and nought for wo,
And sayden, " Fader, do nought so, allas!
But rather eet the flesh upon us tuo.
Oure flesh thou gave us, oure flesh take us fro,
And ete ynough;" right thus thay to him seyde.
And after that, withinne a day or tuo,
Thay layde them in his lappe adoun and deyde.
Himself despeired eek for honger starf.
Thus ended is this mighty erl of Pise;
For his estate fortune fro him carf.
Of this tragede it ought ynough suffise;
Who-so will here it in a longer wise,
Rede the grete poet of Itaile
That highte Daunte, for he can it devise,
Fro poynt to poynt nought oon word wil he fayle.

DE NERONE

Although that Nero were as vicious
As any fiend that lieth ful lowe adoun,
Yit he, as tellith us Suetonius,
This wyde world had in subjeccioun,
Bothe est and west, south and septemtrioun.
Of rubies, sapphires, and of perles white,
Were alle his clothes embroidred up and doun;
For he in gemmis gretly gan delite.
More delycat, more pompus of array,
More proud was never emperour than he.
That ylke cloth that he hadde wered a day,
After that tyme he wolde it never see,
Nettis of gold thred had he gret plentee,
To fisshe in Tyber, whan him list to pleye.
His willes were as lawe in his degree,
For fortune as his frend wold him obeye.
He Rome brente for his delicacie;
The senatours he slew upon a day,
To here how men wolde wepen and wolde crye;
And slew his brother, and by his suster lay,
His modir made he in pitous array,
Her body he let slytten, to byholde
Wher he conceyved was, so waylaway!

That he so litel of his modir tolde.
No tear out of his eyen for that sighte
He wept; but sayde, a fair womman was she.
Gret wonder is how that he coude or mighte
Be domesman upon hir dede beautee.
The wyn to bringen him comaundid he,
And drank anon, non other wo he made.
Whan might is tornèd unto crueltee,
Allas! too deepe wil the venym wade.
In youthe a maister hadde this emperour,
To teche him letterature and curtesye;
For of moralitee he was the flour,
As in his tyme, but if the bokes lye.
And whil his maister had of him maistrie,
He made him be so connyng and so souple,
That longe tyme it was ere tyrranye
Or ony vice dorst on him uncouple.
This Seneca, of which that I devyse,
Bycause that Nero had of him such drede,
For he fro vices wolde the king chastise
Discretly as by word, and nought by dede.
"Sir," wold he sayn, "an emperour mot neede
Be vertuous and hate tyrannye."
For which he in a bath made him to bleede
On both his armes, til he moste dye.
This Nero hadde eek of a custumance
In youthe before his maister for to ryse,
Which after-ward he thought a gret grevaunce;
Therfore he made him deyen in this wise.
But nontheles this Seneca the wise
Chose in a bath to deye in this manére,
Rather than to have another tormentise;
And thus hath Nero slayn his maister deere.
Now fel it so that fortune lust no lenger
The highe pride of Nero to cherice;
For though he were strong, yit was she strenger;
She thoughte thus, "By God! I am too nyce,
To set a man that is fulfilled of vice
In high degree, and emperour him calle;
By God! out of his sete I wil him trice:
Whan he least weneth, soonest shal he falle.
The poeple rose on him upon a night
For his defaute, and whan he is aspyed,

Out of his dores anon he hath him dight
Aloone, and where he wende he was allyed,
He knokkede fast; and ay the more he cried,
The faster shutte thay the doores alle.
Than wist he wel he had nowher to hide,
And went his way, no longer durst he calle.
The peple cried, and rumbled up and doun,
That with his eres herd he how thay sayde,
"Wher is this false traitour, this Neroun?"
For fere almost out of his witte he fled,
And to his goddess piteously he prayde
For socour, but it mighte nought betyde;
For drede of this him thoughte that he dyde,
And ran into a gardyn hym to hyde.
And in this gardyn fond he cherles twaye
Down sittyng by a fyr ful greet and reed,
And to these cherles tuo he gan to pray
To slay him, and to girden off his heed,
That to his body, whan that he were deed,
Were no despyt y-don for his defame.
Himself he slew, he coude no better speed;
Of which fortúne thai laughed and hadde game.

DE OLIPHERNO

Was never capitaine under a king
That realmes mo put in subjecciouN,
Nor strenger was in feld of alle thing
As in his tyme, nor gretter of renoun;
Nor more pompous in heih presumpciouN,
Than Oliphern, which that fortune ay kiste
So wantonly, and ladde him up and doun,
Til that his heed was off ere he it wiste.
Nought oonly that the world had of him awe,
For losyng of richess and libertee,
But he made every man deneye his lawe;
Nabógodónosúr was lord, sayde he;
No other god or king shuld honoured be.
Ageinst his heste dar no wight trespáce,
Save in Betholia, a strong citee,
Wher Eliachim a prest was of that place.
But tak keep of that dethe of Olipherne:
Amyd his host he dronke lay one night

Withinne his tente, large as is a berne;
And yit, for al his pomp and al his might,
Judith, a womman, as he lay upright
Slepying, his heed off smot, and fro his tent
Ful privily she stole from every wight,
And with his heed unto hir toun she wente.

DE REGE ANTIOCHIE ILLUSTRI

What needith it of king Antiochus,
To telle his heye and royal magestee,
His heyhe pride, his werkes venemous?
For such another was ther noon as he.
Rede which that he was in Machabee,
And rede the proude wordes that he sayde,
And why he fel fro his prosperitee,
And in an hil how wrecchidly he deyde.
Fortune him hath enhauncèd so in pryde,
That verraily he wend he might atteyne
Unto the sterres upon every syde,
And in a balaunce weyen ech mounteyne,
And alle the floodes of the see restreyne.
And Goddes peple had he most in hate;
Them wold he slee in torment and in peyne,
Wenyng that God might not his pride abate.
And for that Nichanor and Thimothee
With Jewes were venquisht mightily,
Unto the Jewes such an hate had he,
That he bad bring his car ful hastily,
And swor, and sayde ful despiteously,
Unto Jerusalem he wold eftsoone,
To wreke his ire on it ful cruelly;
But of his purpos he was let ful soone.
God, for his menace, him so sore smoot
With invisible wounde ay incurable,
That in his guttes was the payn so hot,
That wel nigh was his lif then importable.
And certeynly the deth was resonable;
For many a mannes guttes dede he peyne;
But fro his purpos cursed and damnable,
For al his smert, he wolde him nought restreyne.
But bad anon apparailen his host,
And sodeynly, ere he was of it aware,

God dauntede al his pride and al his boast
For he so sore fel out of his car,
That hurte his lymbes and his skyn to-tare,
So that he mighte nomore go or ryde;
But in a chare aboute men did him bare
Al bruised and broken, bothe bak and syde.
The wrath of God him smot so cruely,
That in his body wicked wormes crepte,
And therwithal he stonk so orribly,
That noon of al his servaunts that him kepte,
Whether that he awook or else slepte,
Mighte nought the stynk of his body endure.
In this meschief he weylèd and eek wepte,
And knew God lord of every créatúre.
To al his host and to himself also
Ful loathsome was the stynk of this vilayne;
Nor no man might him beren to or fro;
And in his stynk and in his orrible payne
He starf ful wrecchedly in a mountayne.
Thus hath this robbour and this homicide,
That many a man had made wepe and playne,
Such guerdoun as that longeth unto pryde.

DE ALEXANDRO MAGNO, PHILLIPPI REGIS MACEDONIE FILIO

The story of Alisaunder is so comúne,
That every wight that hath discrecioun
Hath herd som-what or al of his fortúne;
Thys wyde world as in conclusioun
He won by strengthe, or for his high renoun,
Thay weren glad for pees unto him sende.
The pride of man and boast he layd adoun,
Wher-so he cam, unto the worldes ende.
Comparisoun yit mighte never be makèd
Bitwen him and noon other conquerour;
For al this world for drede of him hath quakèd.
He was of knyghthod and of fredom flour;
Fortune him made the heir of hir honoúr;
Save wyn and wymmen, no thing might aswage
His high entent in armes and laboúr,
So was he ful of leonyne corage.
What pris were it to him, though I you tolde

Of Dárius, and an hundred thousand mo
Of kynges, princes, dukes, and erles bolde,
Which he conquérèd and brought unto wo?
I say, as fer as men may ryde or go,
The world was his, what shold I more devyse?
For thouhe I write or tolde you evermo
Of his knighthood, it mighte nought suffise.
Twelf yer he regnèd, as saith Machabee;
Philippes son of Macedon he was,
That first was king of Grece that contree.
O worthy gentil Alisaundre, alas!
That ever shulde falle such a case!
Empoysoned of thin oune folk thou were;
Thy Six fortune is torned into an Ace
And right for thee she never wepte a teere
Who shal me give teeres to compleigne
This deth of gentiless and of fraunchise,
Who al the worlde had in his demeine;
And yit him thought it mighte nought suffice,
So ful was his corage of high emprise.
Allas! who shal me helpe to endite
Fals infortúne, and poysoun to despise,
The whiche two cause of this wo I write.

JULIUS CESAR

By wisedom, manhod, and by gret laboúr,
Fro humblehede to royal majestee
Up roos he, Julius the conquerour,
That won al the occident by land and see,
By strengthe of hond or else by tretee,
And unto Rome made them tributarie
And since of Rome the emperour was he,
Til that fortúne wax his adversarie.
O mighty Cesar, that in Thessalie
Against Pompeius, fader thin in lawe,
That of the orient had the chivalrie,
As fer as that the day bigynneth to dawe,
Thrugh thi knighthod thou hast him take and slawe,
Save fewe folk that with Pompeus fledde;
Thurgh which thou puttist al the east in awe;
Thanke fortúne that so wel thee spedde.

But now a litel while I wil bywaile
This Pompeus, the noble governour
Of Rome, which that fled from this bataile;
Alas! oon of his men, a fals traitoúr,
His heed off smoot, to wynnen him favoúr
Of Julius, and him the hed he broughte.
Alas! Pompey, of the orient conquerour,
That fortune unto such an end thee broughte.
To Rome agayn repaireth Julius,
With his triumphe laurial ful hye.
But on a tyme Brutus and Cassius,
That ever hadde to his estat envýe,
Ful privily hath made conspiracie
Against this Julius in subtil wise;
And cast the place in which he shulde dye
With daggers bright, as I shal you devyse.
This Julius to the capitoile wente,
Upon a day, as he was wont to goon;
And in the capitoil anon him hente
This false Brutus, and his other foon,
And stikèd him with bodekyns anon
With many a wounde, and thus thay let him lye.
But never groned he at no strook but oon,
Or ellse at tuo, but-if the storie lye.
So manly was this Julius of herte,
And so wel loved estatly honestee,
That though his deedly woundes sore smerte,
His mantil over his hipes castes he,
For no man shulde seen his bare body.
And as he lay adeyinge in a traunce,
And wiste wel that verrayly deed was he
Of honestee yet had he rémembraúnce.
Lucan, to thee this story I recomende,
And to Swetoun and to Valirius also,
That al the story writen word and ende,
How to these grete conqueroúres tuo
Fortune was firste frend and after fo.
No man may trust upon hir favour longe,
But watch and wait for hir for evermo,
Witnesse on alle thise conqueroures stronge.

CRESUS

This riche Cresus, whilom king of Lyde,
Of which Cresús Cirus him sore dredde,
Yet was he caught amyddes al his pride,
And to the fyr to brenne him men him ladde.
But such a rayn doun fro the heven shedde,
That slew the fyr and made him to escape.
But to be ware yet grace noon he hadde,
Til fortune on the gallows made him gape.
Whan he escapèd was, he coud nought stente
For to bygynne a newe werre agayn;
He wende wel, for that fortúne him sente
Such hap, that he escaped thurgh the rayn,
That of his foos he mighte not be slayn.
And eek a dream upon a night him lad,
Of which he was so proud and eek so fayn,
That to vengeaunce he al his herte bad.
Upon a tree he was set, as him thoughte,
Wher Jubiter him wasshed bothe bak and side,
And Phebus eek a fair towel him broughte
To drye him with, and therfore wax his pride;
And to his doughter that stood him biside,
Which that he knew in high sciénce abounde,
And bad hir tellen what it signifyde,
And she his dreem right thus began expounde.
"The tree," quod she, "the gallows is to mene,
And Jubiter betokeneth snow and rayn,
And Phebus with his towel al so clene,
Tho be, the sonne stremes, soth to sayn.
Thou shalt anhangid be, fader, certayn;
Rayn shal thee wash, and sonne shal thee drye."
Thus warned she him ful plat and ek ful playn
His doughter, which that callèd was Phanie.
And hangèd was Cresus this proude king,
His royal trone might him not availe.
Tragedie is noon other maner thing,
Nor can for other thinges cry or waile,
But for that fortune wil alway assayle
With unware strook the realmes that be proude;
For whan men trusteth hir, than wil she faile,
And cover hir bright face with a clowde.

THE NONNE PRESTES TALE

"Ho, sir!" quoth then the Knight, "no more
of this;
That ye have said is right ynough I wis,
And moche mor; for litel hevynesse
Is right i-nough for moste folk, I gesse.
I say for me, it is a gret disease,
Wher men have ben in grete welthe and ease,
To heren of their sudden fal, allas!
And the contraire is joye and gret solas;
As whan a man hath ben in pore estate,
And clymbith up, and wexeth fortunate,
And ther abydeth in prosperitee,
Such thing is gladsom, as it thinkith me,
And of such thing were goodly for to telle."
"Yea," quoth our Host, "by seinte Paules belle,
Ye say right soth; this monk hath clappid lowde;
How fortune was y-covered with a clowde,
I know not what, and also of tragedie
Right now ye herd; pardy! no remedye
It is for to bywayle or to compleyne
That which is doon; and also it is a peyne,
As ye have said, to here of hevynesse.
Sir monk, no more of this, so God you blesse;
Your tale anoyeth al this companie;
Such talking is nought worth a boterflye,
For therinne is there no disport ne game.
Wherfor, sir monk, dan Pieres by your name,
I pray yow hertly, tel us somewhat else;
For but for al the gingling of the bells
That on your bridil hong on every syde,
By hevens king, that for us alle dyde,
I shold ere this have fallen doun for sleep,
Although the slough had never ben so deep;
Than had your longe tale been told in vayn.
For certeynly, as these clerkes sayn,
Wher as a man may have no audience,
Nought helpith it to tellen his sentence.
And wel I know the substance is in me,
If eny thing shal wel reported be.

Sir, say somwhat of huntyng, I yow pray."
"Nay," quoth the Monk, "I have no lust to play;
Now let another telle, as I have told."
Then spak our Ost with rude speche and bold,
And said unto the nonnes priest anon,
"Com near, thou priest, come near, thou sir Johan,
Tel us such things as may our hertes glade;
Be blithe, although thou ryde upon a jade.
What though thin hors be bothe foul and lene?
If he wil serve thee reck thee not a bene;
Look that thin hert be mery evermo."
"Yis, sir, yis, Hoste," quoth he, "so may I go,
But I be mery, count it me a sin."
And right anon he did his tale beginne;
And thus he sayd unto us every one,
This sweete priest, this goodly man sir John.

A pore wydow, somwhat stooped in age,
Was whilom duellyng in a narrow cotáge,
Bisyde a grove, stondyng in a dale.
This wydowe, of which I telle yow my tale,
Syn that same day that she was last a wif,
In paciens ladde a ful symple lyf.
For litel was hir catel and hir rent;
By housbondry of such as God hir sent,
She fond hirself, and eek hir doughtres tuo.
Thre large sowes had she, and no mo,
Thre kyne, and eek a sheep tha highte Malle.
Ful sooty was hir bour, and eek hir halle,
In which she eet ful many a slender bit.
Of poynaunt sauce hir needid never a whit.
No deynte morsel passid thrugh hir throte;
Hir dyet was according to hir cote.
Repletion had made hir never sik;
Ful modest diet was al hir phisik,
And exercise, and labour and singyng.
The goute stayed hir not in hir daunsyng,
The apoplexie shooke not hir heed;
No wyne drank she, neither whit ne reed;
Hir bord was servyd most with whit and blak,
Milk and broun bred, in which she fond no lak,

Rost bacoun, and som tyme an egg or two;
And on her poore ferme she livèd so.
A yerd she had, enclosèd al aboute
With stikkes, and a drye ditch withoute,
In which she had a cok, hight Chaunteclere,
In al the lond of crowyng was none his peere.
His vois was merier than the mery orgon,
On masse dayes that in the chirche drone;
Wel surer was his crowyng in his cell,
Than is a clok, or yet an abbay bell,
By nature knew he ech ascension
Of all the houres that struck in thilke toun;
For when degrees fyftene were ascendid,
Thanne crew he wel, it might not be amendid.
His comb was redder than the fyn coral,
Embattled, as it were a castel wal.
His bill was blak, and lyke jet it shon;
Lik azure were his legges, and his tone;
His nayles whitter than the lily flour,
And lik the burnisht gold was his coloúr.
This gentil cok had in his governaunce
Seven hennes, for to do al his plesaúnce,
Which were his sustres and his paramoures,
And wonder lik to him, in there coloúres.
Of whiche the fairest coloured on hir throte,
Was clepèd fayre damysel Pertilote.
Curteys she was, discret, and debonaire,
And kind in thoughte, and bar hirself ful faire,
Since the day that she was seven night old,
That she hath trewely the hert in hold
Of Chaunteclere lockèd in every limb;
He loved hir so, that wel it was with him.
But such a joye was it to here him synge,
Whan that the brighte sonne gan to springe,
In swete accord, "my love is gone and fledde."
For at that tyme, as I have ever redde,
Bestis and briddes coude speke and synge.
And so byfel, that in a bright morning,
As Chaunteclere among his wyves alle
Sat on his perche, that was in the halle,
And next him sat this faire Pertelote,
This Chauntecler gan gronen in his throte,
As man that in his dreem is trobled sore.

And whan that Pertelot thus herd him rore,
She was agast, and sayde, "herte deere,
What aileth you to grone in this manére?
Ye be a verray sleper, fy for shame!"
And he answerd and sayde thus, "Madame,
I pray you, that ye take it nought in grief:
By God, me thought I was in such meschief
Right now, that yet myn hert is sore afright.
Now God," quoth he, "my dreaming rede aright,
And keep my body out of foul prisoún
Me thought, how that I romèd up and doun
Withinne oure yerd, and that I saw a beest,
Was lik an hound, and wold have made arrest
Upon my body, and wold have had me deed.
His colour was bitwixe yelow and reed;
And tippèd was his tail, and bothe his eeres
With blak, unlik the remnaunt of his heres.
His snowt was smal, with glowynge eyen tweye;
Yet of his look for fear almost I deye;
This causèd me my gronyng doubteles."
"Away!" quoth she, "fy on you, herteless!
Allas," quoth she, "for, by that God above,
Now have ye lost myn hert and al my love;
I can nought love a coward, by my feith.
For certes, what so eny womman seith,
We alle desiren, if it mighte be,
To have our housbondes, hardy, riche, and fre,
And secret, and no fool and no nigard,
Nor him that is agast of every swerd,
Nor boaster none, by that God above;
How dorst ye say for shame unto your love,
That any thing might make yow afeard?
Have ye no mannes hert, and have a berd?
Allas! and can ye be of dremes agast?
Nothing, God wot, but vanitee at last.
Dremes are engendred of repletións,
And often of fumes, and ill complexioúns,
Whan humours be abundaunt in a wight.
Certes this dreem, which ye have had to-night,
Cometh of the grete superfluitee
Of youre blod and red coloúr, pardé,
Which causeth folk to dremen in there dremes

Of arrows, and of fyr, with reede beemes,
Of rede bestis, that thay wil him byte,
Of contest, and of whelpis greet and lite;
Right as the humour of maléncolie
Causeth, in sleep, ful many a man to crye,
For fere of beres, or of bulles blake,
Or else blake develes wol him take.
Of other humours coude I telle also,
That wirken many a man in slep ful wo;
But I wil passe as lightly as I can.
Lo Cato, which that was so wis a man,
Sayde he nought thus, Care thou not of dremes?
Now, sir," quoth she, "whan we flee fro thise beemes,
For Goddis love, tak thou som laxatyf;
On peril of my soule, and of my lyf,
I counsel you the best, I wil not lye,
That bothe of coloure, and of malencolye
Ye purge yow; and that ye may nouht tarye,
Though in this toun is non apotecarie,
I shal myself with herbes phisik you,
That shal be for youre helth I dar avow;
And in oure yerd the herbes shal I fynde,
The whiche have of her propretee by kynde
To purgen you bynethe, and eek above.
Forget not this, for Goddis owne love!
Ye be ful colerik of complexioún.
Beware the sonne in his ascensioún
Finde yow not replet in humours hote;
And if it do, I dar wel lay a grote,
That ye shal have a fever terciane,
Or elles an agu, that may be your bane.
A day or tuo ye shal have digestives
Of wormes, ere ye take your laxatives,
Of lauriol, century, and fumitory,
Or elles of elder bery, that growith thereby,
Of catapus, or of dogwood berrys,
Of yvy in our yerd, that mery is;
Pike hem up right as thay growe, and et hem in.
Be mery, housbond, for your fader kyn!
Drede no dremes; I can say no more."
"Madame," quod he, "gramercy for your lore.
But natheles, as touching Dan Catoun,

That hath of wisdom such a gret renoun,
Though that he bad no dremes for to drede,
By God, men may in olde bookes rede
Of many a man, more of auctoritee
That ever Catoun was, so telle I the,
That say ful other wise in there sentence,
And have wel founden by experience,
That dremes be significacioúns,
As wel of joye, as tribulaciouns,
That folk enduren in this lif presént.
Ther nedeth make of this no argument;
The verray proof is shewid forth in dede.
One of the grettest authors that men rede,
Saith thus, that whilom two feláws are went
On pylgrimage in a ful good entente;
And happèd so, thay com into a toun,
Wher as ther was such congregacioun
Of people, and eek such lack of herbergage,
That thay fond nought as moche as one cotage,
In which that thay mighte bothe i-lodgèd be.
Wherfor thay musten of necessitee,
For that one night, parten there compaignye;
And ech of them goth to his hostelrye,
And took his lodging as it wolde falle.
The one of them was lodgèd in a stalle,
Fer in a yerd, with oxen of the plough;
That other man was lodgèd wel ynough,
As was his áventúre, or his fortúne,
That us govérnith all and in comune.
And so bifel, that, long ere it were day,
This one dremed in his bed, ther as he lay,
How that his felaw gan upon him calle,
And sayd, 'allas! for in an oxe stalle
This night I shal be murdrid where I lye.
Now help me, deere brother, or I dye;
In alle haste cum to me, and take my part.'
This man out of his slep for fear upstarte;
But whan that he was waked out of his sleep,
He tornèd him, and took of this no keep;
He thought his dreem was but a vanité.
Thus twies in his sleepe dremèd he.
And at the thridde time yet his felawe

Com, as he thought, and sayd, 'I am now slawe;
Bihold my bloody woundes, deep and wyde
Arise up erly in the morning tyde,
And at the west gate of the toun,' quoth he,
'A carteful of donge there shalt thou see,
In which my body is hyd ful prively;
Arrest the cart and that right boldely.
My gold causèd my murdre, soth to sayn.'
And told him every poynt how he was slayn,
With a ful piteous face, pale of hewe.
And truste wel, his dreem he found ful trewe;
For on the morrow, sone as it was day,
To his feláwes inn he took the way;
And whan he cam ny to this oxe stalle,
After his felaw he bigan to calle.
The hostiller he answered him anon,
And sayde, 'Sir, your felaw is agon,
As soone as day he went out of the toun.'
This man gan falle in a suspeccioún,
Remembring on his dremes as he laye,
And forth he goth, no longer wold he staye,
Unto the west gate of the toun, and found
A dong cart as it went to dong the ground,
That was arrayèd in the same wise
As ye have herd the deede man devise;
And with an hardy hert he gan to crie
Vengeaunce and justice for this felonye.
'My felaw murdrid is this same night,
And in this carte he lieth gapying upright.
I crye out on the ministres,' quoth he,
'That shulde kepe and reule this citee;
Harrow! allas! her lieth my felaw slayn!'
What shold I more unto this tale sayn?
The peple upstert, and caste the cart to grounde,
And in the myddes of the dong thay founde
The dede man, that mordred was al newe.
O blisful God, thou art ful just and trewe!
Lo, how that thow betrayest mordre alday!
Mordre wil out, certes it is no nay.
Murder so lothsome is and abhominable
To God, that is so just and resonable,
That he wil never suffer it hidden be;

Though it abyde a yeer, or tuo, or thre,
Morder wil out, is my conclusioun.
And right anon, the mynistres of that toun
Have caught the carter, and have bete him so,
And eek the hostiller y-rackèd too,
That thay have told there wikkednes anon,
And were a-hangèd by the nekke-bone.
Here may ye see that men shal dremes drede.
And certes in the same book I rede,
Right in the nexte chaptre after this,
(I gabbe nought, may I have joye and blisse),
Tuo men that wold have passèd over see
For certeyn causes into a fer contree,
If that the wynd hadde not ben contrárie,
That made them in a citee for to tarie,
That stood ful mery upon an haven syde.
But on a day, aboute the even tyde,
The wynd gan chaunge, and blew as plesed them best.
Jolyf and glad they wenten unto rest,
And them bithought ful erly for to sayle;
But to the one man fel a gret mervayle.
The one of them in slepyng as he lay,
Dreméd a wonder dreme, before the day;
He thought a man stood by his beddes syde,
And him comaunded, that he shuld abyde,
And sayd him thus, 'If thou to morrow wende,
Thow shalt be drowned; my tale is at an ende.'
He woke, and told that other the visión,
And prayèd him to stayen in the toun;
As for that day, he prayd him to abyde.
His felaw that lay by his beddis syde,
Gan for to laugh, and scornèd him ful fast.
'No dreem,' quoth he, 'may make myn herte agaste,
That I wil stayen from myn owen thinges.
I sette not a straw by thy dremýnges,
For dremes be but vanitees and japes.
Men dremen every day of owles and apes,
And eke of many a fancy therwithal;
Men dreme of thinges that never happen or shal.
But since I see that thou wilt here abyde,
And thus wilt wasten wilfully thy tyde,

God wot I sory am; and have good day.'
And thus he took his leve, and went his way.
But ere he hadde half his cours i-sayled,
I know not why nor what meschaunce it ayled,
But casuelly the shippes bottom rent,
And ship and man under the watir went
In sight of other shippes ther byside,
That with him sailèd at the same tyde.
"And therfore, faire Pertelot so deere,
By such ensamples olde mayst thou hear
That no man sholde be so rekkeless
Of dremes, for I say thee douteless,
That many a dreem ful sore is for to drede.
Lo, in the lif of seint Kenelm, I rede,
That was Kenulphus sone, that noble king
Of Mercia, how Kenilm dremed a thing.
A litil, ere he was mordred, by traisoun,
He saw his murdre in a visioún.
His norice him expounded wisely
His dreme, and bad him kepe him as he may
Fro traisoun; but he was but seven yer old,
And therfore litel tale hath he us told
Of eny dreme, so holy was his hert.
By God, I hadde rather than my shert,
That ye had red his legend, as have I.
Dame Pertelot, I say you trewely,
Macrobius, that writ the visioún
In Affrik of the worthy Cipioún,
Affermeth dremes, and saith that thay be
Warnyng of thinges that men after see.
And forthermore, I pray bithink you wel
In the olde Testament, of Daniel,
If he held dremes to be as vanytee.
Rede eek of Joseph, and ther shal ye see
Whethir som tyme dremes ben (I say not alle)
Warnyng of thinges that shal after falle.
Think of Egiptes king, Dan Pharao,
His baker and his botiler also,
Whethir thay felte no effect, pardé.
He that wil rede of many a fer countré,
May find of dremes many a wondrous thing.
Lo Cresus, which that was of Lydes king,
Dremèd he not he sat upon a tree,

Which signifièd he shuld hangèd be?
Lo here Andromacha, Ectóres wif,
That day that Ector shulde lose his lif,
She dremèd on the same night byforn,
How that the body of Ector schuld be torn,
If on that day he wente into batáyle;
She warnèd him, but it might nought availe;
He wente forth to fighte natheles,
And he was slayn anon of Achilles.
But thilke tale is al too long to telle,
And eek it is ny day, I may not duelle.
Shortly I say, as for conclusion,
That I shal have of this my visioun
Adversitee; and I say forthermore,
That I ne set by laxatifs no store,
For thay be venemous, wel know I it;
I them defye; I love them never a whit.
"Now let us speke of mirthe, and stay al this;
Madame Pertilot, so have I blis,
Of one thing God hath me sent large grace;
For when I see the beautee of your face,
Ye be so scarlet red about your eyen,
It makith al my drede for to dyen,
For, al so sure as *In principio*,
Mulier est hominis confusio.
(Madame, the sentence of this Latyn is,
Womman is mannes joye and mannes blis.)
For when I fiele a-night your softe syde,
Al be it that I may not on you ryde,
For that your perche is made so narrow, allas!
I am so ful of joye and of solás,
That I defye both vision and dreme."
And with that word he flew doun fro the beem,
For it was day, and eek his hennes alle;
And with a chuk he gan them for to calle,
For he had found a corn, lay in the yard.
Royal he was, he was nomore aferd;
He fetherid Pertelote twenty tyme,
And trad as often, ere that it was prime.
He lokith as it were a grim lioún;
And on his toes he rometh up and doun,
Him deynèd not to set his foot to grounde.
He chukkith, whan he hath a corn i-founde,

And to him rennen then his wifes alle.
Thus royal, as a prince is in his halle,
Leve I this chaunteclere in his pastúre;
And after wil I telle his áventúre.
Whan that the moneth in which the world bigan,
That highte March, whan God first makèd man,
Was complet, and y-passèd were also,
Since March bygan, tway monthes and dayes tuo,
Byfell that Chaunteclere in al his pride,
His seven wyves walkyng by his syde,
Cast up his eyen to the brighte sonne,
That in the signe of Taurus had i-ronne
Twenty degrees and one, and somwhat more;
He knew by nature, and no other lore,
That it was prime, and crew with blisful crie.
"The sonne," he sayde, "is clomben up on hy
Twenty degrees and one, and more i-wis.
Madame Pertelot, my worldes blis,
Herken these blisful briddes how thay synge,
And see these fresshe floures how thay springe;
Ful is myn hert of revel and solaás."
But sodeinly him fel a sorrowful case;
For ever the latter end of joye is wo.
God wot that worldly joye is soone go;
And if a writer coude faire endite,
He in a chronique safely might it write,
As for a soverayn notabilitee.
Now every wys man let him herken me;
This story is as trewe, I undertake,
As is the book of Launcelot the Lake,
That wommen hold in ful gret reverence.
Now wil I torne agayn to my sentence.
A fals fox, ful of sleight and iniquitee,
That in the grove had dwelt for yeres thre,
By destinee and fates ordinaunce,
Is broke the same night thorough the fence
Into the yerd, where Chaunteclere the faire
Was wont, and eek his wyves, to repaire;
And in a bed of wortes stille he lay,
Til it was passèd the morning of the day,
Waytyng his tyme on Chaunteclere to falle;
As gladly do these homicides alle,

That in awayte lye to murthre men.
O false mordrer lurkyng in thy den!
O newe Scariot, newe Genilon!
False dissembler, O Greke Sinon,
That broughtest Troye al utterly to sorrow!
O Chauntecler, accursèd be the morrow,
That thou into the yerd flew fro the bemes!
Thou were ful wel i-warnèd by thy dremes,
That thilke day was perilous to thee.
But what that God forwot most needes be,
After the opynyoun of certeyn clerkis.
Witnesse him, that redeth on there werkes,
In scoles there is altercacioún
In this matier, gret disputacioún,
And hath ben of an hundred thousend men.
But yit I can not sift it to the bran,
As can the holy doctor Augustýn,
Or Boece, or the bisshop Bradwardyn,
Whether that Goddis worthy foreknowing
Constraineth me needly to do a thing,
(By need I mene simple necessitee);
Or else if ful free choice be graunted me
To do that same thing, or to do it not,
Though God foreknew it, ere that it was wrought;
Or if his knowing never constreineth me,
Save by condicional necessitee.
I wil not have to do with such matére;
My tale is of a cok, as ye shal here,
That took his counseil of his wyf with sorrow,
To walken in the yerd upon the morrow,
When he had dremed the dreme, that I you tolde.
Wymmens counseiles be ful ofte colde:
Wommanns counseile brought us first to wo,
And made Adam fro paradys to go,
Although he was ful mery, and wel at ease.
But as I know not whom it might displease,
If I counséil of womman wolde blame,
Pas over, for I sayd it in my game.
Rede authors, wher thay trete of such matére,
And what thay say of wommen ye may here.
These be the cokkes wordes, and not myne,
I can no harme of no wommen divine.
Faire in the sand, to bathe hir merily,

Lieth Pertelot, and alle hir sustres by,
Beneath the sonne; and Chaunteclere so free
Sang merier than the mermayd in the see;
For Phisiologus seith certeynly,
How that thay syngen wel and merily.
And so byfel that as he cast his eye
Among the wortes on a boterflye,
He was war of this fox that lay ful lowe.
Not carèd he a whit thanne for to crowe,
But cryde anon, "cok, cok," and up he stert,
As man that was affrayèd in his hert.
For naturelly a beest desireth flee
From his contrárie, if he may it see,
Though never bifore he had seen it with his eye.
This Chaunteclere, when he gan it aspye,
He wold have fled, but that the fox anon
Said, "Gentil sir, allas! why wol ye gon?
Be ye affrayd of me that am youre frend?
Now, certes, I were worse than eny feend,
If I to you wold harm or vilonye.
I am not come your counsail to espye.
But trewely the cause of my comýnge
Was only for to herken how ye singe,
For trewely ye have as mery a crie,
As eny aungel hath, that is on hy;
Therwith ye have of musik more felýnge,
Than had Boéce, or eny that can synge.
My lord your fader (God his soule blesse)
And eke youre moder of her gentilesse
Have in myn hous ibeen, to my gret ease;
And certes, sir, ful fayn wold I you please.
But for men speke of syngyng, I wol say,
So may I kepe wel myn eyen tway,
Save ye, I herde never man so synge,
As did your fadir in the morwenynge.
Certes out of his herte it was he song.
And for to make his vois the more strong,
He wold so striven, that with bothe his eyen
He moste wynke, so lowde he wolde crien,
And stonden on his typtoes therwithal,
And streche forth his necke long and smal.
And eek he was of such discressioún,
That ther was no man in no regioún

That him in song or wisdom mighte passe.
I have wel red in Dan Burnel the asse
Among his verses, how ther was a cok,
That when a prestes sone gave him a knok
Upon his leg, whil he was yong and nyce,
He made him for to lose his benefice.
But certeyn ther is no comparisoún
Betwix the wisdom and discressioún
Of youre fader, and of his subtiltee.
Now synge, sir, for seinte Charitee,
Let see, can ye your fader countrefete?"
This Chaunteclere his wynges gan to bete,
As man that coude his tresoun nought espye,
So was he ravyssht with his flaterie.
Allas! ye lordynges, many a fals flatoúr
Is in your hous, and many a fair lyér,
That pleasen you wel more, by my faith,
Than he that sothfastnesse unto you saith.
Rede ye Ecclesiast of flaterie;
Be war, ye lordes, of their treccherie.
This Chaunteclere stood highe upon his toes,
Strecching his necke, and held his eyen close,
And gan to crowe lowde for the nonce;
And Dan Russél the fox stert up at once,
And by the throte caughte Chaunteclere,
And on his bak toward the woode him bere.
For yit was there no man that him espied.
O desteny, that maist not be defied!
Allas, that Chaunteclere flew fro the beames!
Allas, his wif that rekkèd not of dremis!
And on a Friday fel al this meschaunce.
O Venus, that art goddesse of pleasaúnce,
Since that thy servant was this Chaunteclere,
And in thy service ever did his powere,
More for delit, than the world to multiplie,
Why woldst thou suffre him on thy day to dye?
O Gaufred, dere mayster soverayn,
That, when the worthy king Richard was slayn
With shot, compleynedist of his deth so sore,
Why had I nought thy cunning and thy lore,
The Friday for to chiden, as did ye?
(For on a Friday sothly slayn was he.)
Than wold I shewe you how I coude compleyne,

For Chauntecleres drede, and for his peyne.
Certis such cry and lamentacioún
Was never of ladies made, whan Ilioún
Was wonne, and Pirrus with his straighte swerd,
Whan he had caught kyng Priam by the berd,
Had slain hym as doth tellen Eneydos,
As maden alle the hennes in the close,
Whan thay had seyn of Chauntecler the sight.
But above al Dame Pertelote shright,
Ful lowder than did Hasdrubaldes wyf,
When that hir housebond hadde lost his lyf,
And that the Romayns had i-brent Cartáge,
She was so ful of torment and of rage,
That wilfully unto the fyr she stert,
And brend hirselven with a stedfast hert.
O woful hennes, right so crièd ye,
As, when that Nero brente the citee
Of Rome, cride the senatoures wyves,
For that there housbondes losten alle there lyves;
Withouten gilt this Nero hath them slayn.
Now wil I torne to my matér agayn.
The silly wydow, and hir doughtres tuo,
Herden these hennys crie and maken wo,
And out at dores starte thay anon,
And saw the fox toward the grove gon,
And bar upon his bak the cok away;
They criden, "Out! harrow and wayleway!
Ha, ha, the fox!" and after him thay ran,
And eek with staves many another man;
Ran Colle our dogge, and Talbot, and Garlond,
And Malkyn, with a distaf in hir hond;
Ran cow and calf, and eek the verray hogges
Were sore fered for berkyng of the dogges,
And showtyng of the men and wymmen eke,
Thay ronne that thay thought there herte breke.
Thay yelleden as feendes do in helle;
The duckes criden as men wold them kill;
The gees for fere flowen over the trees;
Out of the hyves cam the swarm of bees;
So hidous was the noyse, a *bencite!*
Certes Jacke Straw, and al his compaignie,
Ne maden shoutes never half so shrille,

When that thay wolden eny Flemyng kille,
As on that day was made upon the fox.
Of brass thay broughten hornes and of box,
Of horn and bone, in which thay blew and pooped,
And therwithal thay shrykèd and thay hooped:
It semèd as that heven itself shulde falle.
Now, goode men, I pray you herken alle;
Lo, how fortúne torneth sodeinly
The hope and pride eek of her enemy!
This cok that lay upon this foxes bak,
In al his drede, unto the fox he spak,
And saide, "Sir, if that I were as ye,
Yet shuld I sayn (so may God helpe me),
Turn ye agayn, ye proude cherles alle!
A verray pestilens upon you falle!
Now am I come unto this woodes syde,
For al your noyse, the cok shal heer abyde;
I wil him ete in faith, and that anon."
The fox answerd, "In faith, it shal be doon."
And whil he spak that word, al sodeinly
This cok brak from his mouth right spedily,
And hy upon a tree he flew anon.
And whan the fox saw that he was igone,
"Allas!" quoth he, "O Chaunteclere, allas!
I have to you," quoth he, "y-don trespás,
Inasmoche as I makèd you afered,
Whan I you caught, and brought out of the yerd;
But, sir, I dede it in no wickid entent;
Com doun, and I shal telle you what I ment.
I shal say soth to you, God help me so."
"Nay than," quoth he, "I curse us bothe tuo.
And first I curse myself, bothe blood and bones,
If thou bigile me any ofter than once.
Thou shalt no more, thurgh thy flaterye,
Make me to synge and wynke with myn eye.
For he that wynkith, whan he sholde see,
Al wilfully, God let him cursèd be!"
"Nay," quoth the fox, "but God give him meschaunce,
That is so undiscret of governaúnce,
That jangleth, when he sholde holde his pees."
Lo, thus it is for to be rekkeless,

And negligent, and trust on flaterie.
But ye that holde this tale a folye,
As of a fox, or of a cok or hen,
Tak the moralitee therof, goode men.
For seint Poul saith, that al that writen is,
To oure doctrine it written is i-wys.
Take then the fruyt, and let the chaf be stille.
Now, goode God, if that it be thy wille,
And saith my lord, so make us alle good men;
And bring us alle to his hy blisse. Amen.

THE TALE OF THE DOCTOR OF PHISIK

When that this yeoman his tale ended hadde
Of this false chanon whiche that was so badde
Oure oste gan sayen, "truly and certayne
Thys preest was begylèd, sothely for to sayne,
(He wenynge for to be a phylosófre)
Tylle he no golde lefte had in hys coffre;
And sothely this preest met a sorry jape,
Thys cursed canoun put in hys hood an ape.
But al this wil I passe overe as nowe.
Sir Doctour of Phisyke we prayen you,
Telle us a tale of some honéste matére."
"It shal be done, yf that ye wille it here,"
Sayde this doctoúr, and hys tale began anon.
"Nowe, gode men," quoth he, "herken every oon."

Ther was, as telleth Titus Lyvius,
A knight, that clepèd was Virginius,
Fulfild of honours and of worthiness,
And strong of frendes, and of gret riches.
This knight a doughter hadde by his wyf,
And never hadde he mo in al his lyf.
Fair was this mayde in excellent beautee
Aboven every wight that men may see;
For Nature hath with sovereyn diligence
I-formèd hir in so gret excellence,

As though she wolde say, "Lo, I, Natúre,
Thus can I forme and peynte a créatúre,
When that me list; who can me counterfete?
Pigmalion? No, though he alwey forge and bete,
Or grave, or paynte; for I dar wel sayn,
Apelles, Zeuxis, shulde wirche in vayn,
Either to grave, or paynte, or forge or bete,
If thay presumèd me to counterfete.
For He that is the Former principal
Hath made me his viker general,
To forme and peynte al erthely créatúre
Right as me list, al thing is in my care
Under the moone that may wane and waxe,
And for my werke no thing wil I axe;
My lord and I be fully at accord.
I made hir to the worship of my Lord;
So do I alle myn other créatúres,
What colour that thay be, or what figures."
Thus semeth me that Nature wolde saye.

This mayde was of age twelf yer and twaye,
In which that nature hadde suche delite.
For right as she can peynte a lili white
And ruddy a rose, right with such peynture
She peynted hath this noble créatúre
Er she was born, upon her limbes free,
Where as by right such coloures shulde be;
And Phebus deyèd hadde hire tresses bright,
I-lyk the stremes of his burning light.
And if that excellent was hir beautee,
A thousand fold more vertuous was she.
In hir there lakketh no condicioun,
That hath ben praysed by mens discrecioun.
As wel in body as soule chaste was she;
For which she flourèd in virginitee,
With alle humilitee and abstinence,
With alle temperaunce and pacience,
With modest look and bearyng and array.
Discret she was in answeryng alway,
Though she were wis as Pallas, dar I sayn.
Hir spekyng was ful womanly and playn;
No countrefeted termes hadde she
To seeme wys; but after hir degree

She spak and alle hir wordes more and lesse
Sounyng in vertu and in gentilesse.
Shamefast she was in maydenes shamfastnesse,
Constant in hert, and ever in besynesse,
To dryve hir out of ydelle slogardye.
Bacchus had of hir mouth no maistrye;
For wyn and youthe doon Venús encrece,
As when men in the fyr caste oyle or grece.
And of hir owne vertu unconstreined,
She hath ful ofte tyme sikness feyned,
For that she wolde flee the companye,
Wher likly was to treten of folye,
As is at festes, reveles, and at daunces,
That be occasiouns of daliaunces.
Such thinges maken children for to be
Too soone rype and bold, as men may see,
Which is ful perilous, and hath ben yore;
For al too soone may she lerne the lore
Of boldenesse, when that she is a wyf.
And ye maystresses that older are in lyf
Who lordes doughtres have in governaunce,
Take ye not of my word no displesaúnce;
Thinke that ye be set in governynges
Of lordes doughtres, only for tuo thinges;
Either for ye have kept your honestee,
Or else for ye have fallen in freletee,
And knowe wel y-nough the olde daunce,
And conne forsake fully suche meschaunce
For evermo; therfore, for Cristes sake,
Kepe wel those that ye undertake.
A theef of venesoun, that hath ylaft
His theevishness, and al his wikked craft,
Can kepe a forest best of any man.
Now kepe them wel, for if ye wil ye can;
Loke wel, that to no vice ye assente,
Lest ye be damnèd for your wikked entente,
For who-so doth, a traytour is certayn;
And take keep of that that I shal sayn;
Of al tresoún the sovereyn pestilence
Is, when a wight bytrayeth innocence.
Ye fadres, and ye modres eek also,
Though ye have children, be it one or mo,
Yours is the charge of al their sufferaunce,

Whiles thay be under your governaunce.
Be war, that by ensample of youre lyvynge,
Or by your negligence in chástisynge,
That thay ne perishe; for it is wel sayd,
If that thay do, ye shul ful sore abide.
Under a shepherd softe and negligent,
The wolf hath many a shep and lamb to-rent.
Sufficeth one ensample now as here,
For I moot turne agein to my matére.
This mayde, of which I now my tale expresse,
So kept hir self, hir nedede no maystresse;
For in hir lyvyng maydens mighte rede,
As in a book, every word and dede,
That longeth unto a mayden vertuous;
She was so prudent and so bounteous.
For which the fame outsprong on every syde
Bothe of hir beautee and hir bountee wyde;
That thurgh the lond thay praysèd hir each one,
That lovèd vertu, save envye allone
That sory is of other mennes wele,
And glad is of his sorwe and his ill.
(The doctor made this descripcioun.)
This mayde wente on a day into the toun
Toward the temple, with hir moder deere,
As is of yonge maydenes the manére.
Now was ther then a justice in the toun,
That governour was of that regioún.
And so bifel, this judge his eyen caste
Upon this mayde, consideryng hir ful faste,
As she cam forby where the judge stood.
Anon his herte chaungèd and his mood,
So was he caught with beautee of this mayde,
And to him-self ful privily he sayde,
"This mayde shal be myn for any man."
Anon the feend into his herte ran,
And taughte him sodeinly, that by a slighte
This mayde to his purpos wynne he mighte.
For certes, by no fors, nor by no mede,
Him thought he was not able for to speede;
For she was strong of frendes, and eek she
Confermèd was in such soveráyne bountee
That wel he wist he might hir never wynne,
As for to make hir with hir body synne.

For which with great deliberacioun
He sent after a clerk was in the toun,
The which he knew for subtil and for bold.
This judge unto the clerk his tale hath told
In secret wyse, and made him to assure,
He shulde telle it to no créatúre;
And if he dede he shulde lose his heed.
When that al plotted was this cursed deed,
Glad was the judge, and made him goode cheere,
And gaf him giftes precious and deere.
When shapen was al this conspiracye
Fro poynt to poynt, how that his lecherie
Parformèd sholde be ful subtilly,
As ye shul here after-ward openly,
Hom goth this clerk, that highte Claudius.
This false judge, that highte Apius,—
(So was his name, for it is no fable,
But knowen for a storial thing notáble;
The story is al soth it is no doute),—
This false judge goth now fast aboute
To hasten his delit al that he may.
And so bifel, soone after on a day
This false judge, as telleth us the story,
As he was wont, sat in his consistory,
And gaf his doomes upon sondry case;
This false clerk com forth a ful good pace,
And saide, "Lord, if that it be your wille,
So do me right upon this piteous bille,
In which I pleyne upon Virginius.
And if he wile seyn it is nought thus,
I wil it prove and fynde good witnesse,
That soth is that my bille wil expresse."
The judge answerd, "Of this in his absence
I may not give diffinityf sentence.
Let do him calle, and I wil gladly here;
Thou shalt have alle right, and no wrong heere."
Virginius com to wit the judges wille,
And right anon was red this cursed bille;
The sentence of it was as ye shul heere.
"To you, my lord sir Apius so deere,
Sheweth youre pore servaunt Claudius,
How that a knight callèd Virginius,
Ageins the lawe, agens alle equytee,

Holdeth, expresse ageinst the wille of me,
My servaunt, which that is my thral by right,
Which fro myn hous was stolen on a night
Whiles she was ful yong, that wil I preve
By witnesse, lord, so that ye you not greve;
She is his doughter nought, what-so he say,
Wherfore to you, my lord the judge, I pray,
Yelde me my thralle, if that it be your wille."
Lo, this was al the sentence of the bille.
Virginius gan upon the clerk byholde;
But hastily, ere he his tale tolde,
He wolde have provèd it, as shold a knight,
And eek by witnessyng of many a wight,
That al was fals that sayde his adversarie;
This cursed judge wolde no lenger tarye,
Nor heere a word more of Virginius,
But gaf his judgement, and saide thus;
"I deme anon this clerk his servaunt have.
Thou shalt no lenger in thin hous hir save.
Go bringe hir forth, and put hir in oure warde.
This clerk shal have his thral; thus I awarde."
And when this worthy knight Virginius,
Thurgh the assent of this judge Apius,
Moste by force his deere doughter give
Unto the judge, in lecchery to lyve,
He goth him hom, and sette him in his halle,
And leet anon his deere doughter calle;
And with a face deed as asshen colde,
Upon hir humble face he gan byholde,
With fadres pitee stiking thrugh his herte,
Though wolde he from his purpos not depart.
"Doughter," quoth he, "Virginia be thy name,
Ther be tuo weyes, eyther deth or shame,
That thou most suffre, alas that I was bore!
For never thou deservedest wherfore
To deyen with a swerd or with a knyf.
O deere doughter, ender of my lif,
Which I have fostred up with such plesaúnce,
That never wert out of my rémembraúnce;
O doughter, which that art my laste wo,
And in this lif my laste joye also,
O gemme of chastitee, in pacience
Tak thou thy deth, for this is my sentence;

For love and not for hate thou must be deed,
My piteous hond must smyten off thin hed.
Allas that ever Apius thee saw!
Thus hath he falsly judgèd of the law."
And told hir al the case, as ye bifore
Have herd, it nedeth nought to telle it more.
"Mercy, my deere fader," quoth this mayde.
And with that word she bothe hir armes layde
Aboute his nekke, as she was wont to do,
The teeres brast out of hir eyen tuo,
And sayde: "Goode fader, shal I dye?
Is ther no grace? is ther no remedye?"
"No, certeyn, deere doughter myn," quoth he.
"Than geve me leve, fader myn," quoth she,
"My deth for to compleyne a litel space;
For pardy, Jephthah gaf his doughter grace
For to compleyne, er he hir slew, allas!
And God it wot, no thing was hir trespás,
But that she ran hir fader first to see,
To welcome him with gret solemnitee."
And with that word aswoun she fel anon,
And after, when hir swownyng was agon,
She riseth up, and to hir fader sayde;
"Blessed be God, that I shal deye a mayde.
Geve me my deth, ere that I have a shame.
Do with your child your wille, a goddes name!"
And with that word she prayèd him ful ofte,
That with his swerd he shulde smyte hir softe;
And with that word on swoune doun she fel.
Hir fader, with ful sorwful hert and fel,
Hir heed off smoot, and by the top it caught,
And to the wikked judge anon he broughte,
As he sat in his doom in consistory.
And whan the judge it saw, as saith the story,
He bad him take anon and honge him faste.
But right anon the people rose in haste
To save the knight, for ruthe and for pitee,
For knowen was the fals iniquitee.
The poeple anon hadde súspect in this thing,
By maner of this clerkes fals claiming,
That it was by the assent of Apius;
They wiste wel that he was lecherous.
For which unto this Apius thay goon,

And casten him in prisoun right anon,
Wher as he slew himself; and Claudius,
That servaunt was unto this Apius,
Was doomèd for to honge upon a tree;
But this Virginius of his gret pitee
Prayde for him, that he was banisshèd,
And elles certes he hadde lost his heed.
The remenaunt were a-hangèd, more and lesse,
That were consented to this cursednesse.
Her may men see how synne hath his merite;
Be war, for no man wot how God wil smyte
In no degree, nor in which maner wise
The worm of conscience wol arise
In wicked lyf, though it so pryvy be,
That no man wot of it but God and he;
Whether that he be foolish man or wise,
He may not know how soon will come justice.
Therfore I rede yow this counseil take,
Forsake synne, ere synne you forsake.

THE PARDONERES TALE

Oure Oste gan to swere as he were wood;
"Harrow!" quoth he, "by nayles and by blood!
This was a cursed thef, a fals justice.
As shameful deth as herte can devise
So falle upon his body and his bones!
To the devil I deliver him at once!
Allas! too deere boughte she hir beautee,
Wherfore I say, that alle men maye see,
That giftes of fortúne or of natúre
Be cause of deth of many a créatúre.
Hir beautee was hir deth, I dar wel sayn
Allas! so piteously as she was slayn.
Bot here of wil I not procede nowe,
Men have of beautee grete harme I know.
"But trewely, myn owne maister deere,
This was a piteous tale for to heere;
But natheles, pas over, the mayde is ded.
I pray to God to save thi gentil hed,

And al thine urinales, and thi jordanes,
Thine Ypocras, and thine Galiounes,
And every box ful of thi medicine,
God blesse them and oure lady make thee win,
For I wil swere thou art a propre man,
And lik a prelat, by seint Runyan.
Sayde I not wel? can I not speke a thing?
But wel wot, thou dost myn herte to wring,
I have almost y-caught a cardiacle;
By corpus bones, but-yf I have treácle,
Or else a draught of moyst and corny ale,
Or if I here not now a mery tale,
Myn hert is broste for pitee of that mayde.
Thou, pardoner, thou, belamy," he sayde,
" Tel us a tale, for thou canst many oon."
" It shal be doon," quoth he, " and that anon
But first," quoth he, " her at this ale-stake
I wil bothe drynke and byten on a cake."
But right anon the gentils gan to crie,
" Nay, let him tellen us no ribaldrye.
Tel us som moral thing, that we may here."
" Gladly," quoth he, " I wil that ye requere."
But in the cuppe wil I me bethinke
Upon some honest tale, whil that I drinke."—
" Lordyngs," quoth he, " in chirches whan I preche,
I peyne me to have a loude speche,
And ryng it out, as clere as doth a belle,
For I know al by rote which that I telle.
My theeme is alway oon, and ever was;
Radix malorum est cupiditas.
" First I pronounce whence that I come,
And thenne my bulles shewe I alle and some;
Oure liege lordes seal on my patént,
That shewe I first my body to warrant,
That no man be so hardy, prest ne clerk,
Me to desturbe in Cristes holy werk.
And after that than tel I forth my tales.
Bulles of popes, and of cardynales,
Of patriarkes, and of bisshops, I shewe,
And in Latyn I speke wordes fewe
To savore with my predicacioun,
And for to stir men to devocioun.

Thenne shewe I forth my longe crystal stones,
I-crammèd ful of cloutes and of boones,
Reliks thay be, as wene thei each one.
Than have I tipped with brass a shulder boon,
Which that was of an holy Jewes sheep.
'Good men,' say I, 'tak of my wordes keep;
If that this boon be wasshed in eny welle,
If cow, or calf, or sheep, or oxe swelle,
That eny worm hath ete, or worm i-stonge,
Tak water of that welle, and wasch his tonge,
And it is hool anon. And forthermore
Of pokkes, and of scabbe, and every sore,
Shal every sheep be whole, that of this welle
Drynketh a draught. Tak heed eek what I telle;
If that the goode man, that the beest owneth,
Wil every day, ere that the cok him croweth,
Fastynge, drynke of this welle a deepe draught,
As thilke holy Jew oure eldres taught,
His beestes and his stoor shal multiplie.
And, sires, also it heleth jalousie.
For though a man be ful in jalous rage,
Let make with this water his potáge,
And never shal he more his wyf mystrust,
Though he the soth of hir defaulte wist;
Though hadde she take prestes tuo or thre.
Her is a mitten eek, that ye may see;
He that his honde put in this mitten,
He shal have multiplying of his grayn,
Whan he hath sowen, be it whete or otes,
If that ye offre pense or else grootes.
And, men and wommen, oon thing warne I you;
If eny wight be in this chirche now,
That hath doon synnes orrible, that he
Dar nought for shame of them y-schryven be;
Or ony womman, be she yong or old,
That hath y-made hir housbond cokewold,
Suche folk shal have no power and no grace
To offre to my relikes in this place.
And who so fint him out in suche blame,
Thay wil come up and offre in Goddes name,
And I assoile them by the auctoritee,
Which that by bulle was i-graunted me.'

" By this gaude have I wonnen every yeer
An hundred mark, synce I was pardoner.
I stonde lik a clerk in my pulpit,
And whan the foolish people is doun i-set,
I preche so as ye have herd before,
And telle them an hondred japes more.
Than peyne I me to strecche forth my necke,
And est and west upon the poeple I bekke,
As doth a pigeon, syttyng on a loft;
Myn hondes and my tonge move so oft,
That it is joye to see my busynesse.
Of avarice and of suche cursednesse
Is al my preching, for to make hem free
To give their pence, and namely unto me.
For myn entent is nought but for to wynne,
And no thing for correccioun of synne.
I rekke never at their burying,
Though that there soules go blakeberying.

" For certes many a predicacioun;
Cometh oft tyme of evel entencioun;
Som for plesaúns of folk and flaterie,
To be avauncèd by ypocrisie;
And som for veine glory, and som for hate.
For when I dar not other ways debate,
Than wil I stynge him with my tonge smerte
In preching, so that he shal nothing start
To be diffamèd falsly, if that he
Hath trespast to my bretheren or to me.
For though I telle not his propre name,
Men shal wel knowe that it is the same
By signes, and by other circumstances.
Thus quyt I folk, that do us displesaúnces;
Thus put I out my venom under hewe
Of holynes, to semen holy and trewe.
But shortly myn entent I wil devyse,
I preche no thing but of coveityse.
Therfor my theem is yit, and ever was,
Radix malorum est cupiditas.

" Thus can I preche agayn the same vice
Which that I use, and that is avarice.
But though myself be gilty in the same,
Yit can I maken other folk to blame
Their avarice, and soone to repente,

But that is not my principal entente;
I preche no thing but for coveitise.
Of this matér it ought i-nough suffise.
" Than telle I them ensamples many oon
Of olde stories longe tyme agon.
For silly poeple loven tales olde;
Which thinges can thay wel report and holde.
What? trowe ye, whiles that I may preche
And wynne gold and silver when I teche,
That I wil lyve in povert wilfully?
Nay, nay, I thought it never trewely.
For I wol preche and begge in sondry londes.
I wil not do no labour with myn hondes,
Nor make basketis and lyve therby,
Bycause I wil nought beggen idelly.
I wol noon of the apostles counterfete;
I wol have money, woolle, chese, and whete,
Though it were geven by the prestes page,
Or by the porest wydow in a villáge,
While that hir children starve for famyn.
Nay, I wil drinke licour of the wyn,
And have a joly wenche in every toun.
But herkne, lordynges, in conclusioun,
Youre likyng is that I shal telle a tale.
Now that I dronk a draught of corny ale,
By God, I hope I shal telle you a thing,
That shal by resoun be at your liking;
For though myself be a ful vicious man,
A moral tale yit I you telle can,
Which I am wont to preche, for to wynne.
Now hold your pees, my tale I wil byginne."

In Flaundres whilom was a companye
Of yonge folkes, that haunted al folye,
As ryot, hasard, brothels, and tavernes;
Wher as with lutes, harpes, and citherns,
Thay daunce and play at dice, bothe day and night,
And ete also, and drynk above their might;
Thurgh which thay do the devyl sacrifise
Withinne the develes temple, in cursèd wise,
By superfluitee abhominable.
Their othes be so greet and so damnáble,

That it is grisly for to here them swere.
Our blisful Lordes body thay al tear;
They thoughte Jewes rent him nought y-nough;
And ech of them at otheres synne laugh.
And right anon ther come tumbelers,
With bodies smal and wommen fruiterers,
Singers with harpes, baudes, wafereres,
Whiche that be verray develes officeres,
To kyndle and blowe the fyr of leccherie,
That is anexid unto glotonye.
The holy wryt take I to my witnésse,
That lust is al in wyn and dronkenesse.
Lo, how that dronken Lot unkyndely
Lay by his doughtres tuo unwityngly,
So dronk he was he knew not what he wroughte,
Herodes, who-so wel the story soughte,
Whan he of wyn was répleet at his fest,
Right at his oune table gaf his hest
To slay the baptist John ful gilteles.
Seneca seith a good word douteles;
He saith he can no difference fynde
Betwyx a man that is out of his mynde,
And one that is al dronken in his witt;
But that madness when men have fallen on it,
Persevereth lenger than doth dronkenesse.
O glutonye, ful of al cursednesse;
O cause first of oure confusioun,
O originál of oure damnacioun,
Til Crist had bought us with his blood agayn
Look ye, how dere, and shortly for to sayn,
Abought was first this cursèd felonye;
Corupt was al this world for glotonye.
Adam our fader, and his wyf also,
From Paradys to labour and to wo
Were dryven for that vice, it is no drede.
For whilst that Adam fasted, as I rede,
He was in Paradis, and whan that he
Eet of the fruyt forbidden of a tree,
He was out cast to wo and into peyne.
O glotony, wel ought us on thee pleyne.
If a man knew how many maladyes
Follow excesse and wyn and glotonyes,
He wolde be the more mesuráble

Of his diete, sittyng at his table.
Allas! the shorte throte, the tendre mouth,
Maketh the Est and West, and North and South,
In erthe, in watir, in ayer, man to sweat,
To get a sely glotoun drynke and mete.
Of this matér, O Paul, wel canst thou trete.
Mete for the wombe, and wombe eke for the mete,
Shal God destroyen bothe, as Powel saith.
Allas! a foul thing is it by my faith
To say this word, and fouler is the dede,
When men so drynken of the whyt and rede,
That of his throte he makith his privee
Thurgh thilke cursed superfluitee.
The apostil wepyng saith ful piteously,
Ther walkith many, of which you told have I,
I say it now wepyng with piteous vois,
They are the enemeyes of Cristes cros;
Of which the ende is deth, wombe is their God.
O wombe, o bely, o stynkyng in thi load.
How gret cost and labour is thee to fill
These cokes how they stamp, and streyn, and
spill,
And torne substaunce into accident,
To fulfille al thy glotynous talent.
Out of the harde bones gete thay
The marrow, for thay caste nought away
That may go thurgh the golet softe and sweete;
Of spicery and leeves, for every mete,
Shal be his sause made to his delyt
To make him have a newer appetit.
But certes he that haunteth such delices,
Is deed the whiles that he lyveth in vices.
A lecherous thing is wyn, and dronkenesse
Is ful of stryvyng and of wrecchednesse.
O dronken man, disfigured is thi face,
Sour is thy breth, foul art thou to embrace;
And thurgh thi dronken nose soundeth the soun,
As though thou seydest ay, Samsoún, Samsoún;
And yit, God wot, Samson drank never wyn.
Thou fallist, as it were a stiked swyne;
Thy tonge is lost, and al thin honest cure,
For dronkenes is verray sepulture
Of mannes witt and his discrecioun.

In whom that drynk hath dominacioun,
He can no counseil kepe, it is no drede.
Now keep you from the white and from the rede,
And namely fro the white wyn of Leepe,
That is to selle in Fleetstreet or in Chepe.
This wyn of Spayne crepith subtily
In other wynes growyng faste by,
Of which ther riseth such fumositee,
That whan a man hath dronke draughtes three,
And weneth that he be at hom in Chepe,
He is in Spayne, right at the toun of Lepe,
Nought at Rochelle nor at Burdeaux toun;
And thenne wil thai say, Samsoún, Samsoún.
But herken, lordyngs, o word, I you pray,
That alle the soverayn actes, dar I say,
Of victories in the Olde Testament,
Thorugh the verray God omnipotent
Were doon in abstinence and in prayére;
Look in the Bible, and ther ye may it here.
Loke Attila the grete conqueroúr,
Deyd in his sleep, with shame and díshonoúr,
Bleedyng ay at his nose in dronkenesse;
A captayn shuld ay lyve in sobrenesse.
And over al this, avyse you right wel,
What was comaunded unto Lamuel;
Nought Samuel, but Lamuel say I.
Rede in the Bible, and fynde expressely
Of wyn gevyng to them that have justice.
No more of this, for it may wel suffice.
And now I have i-spoke of glotonye,
Now wil I you forbid al hasardrye.
Hasard is verray moder of lyinges,
And of deceipt and cursed fórsweringes;
Blaspheme of Crist, manslaught, and waste also
Of catel, and of tyme; and forthermo
It is a shame, and contrair to honoúr,
For to be holde a comun hasardour.
And ever the heyer he is of estaat,
The more wil he be holden desolaat,
If that a prince use eny hasardrie,
In alle governance and policie
He is, as by común opinioún,
Holden the lesse in reputacioun.

Stilbon, that was a wis ambasidour,
Was sent unto Corinthe with gret honoúr
Fro Lacidome, to make their alliaúnce;
And whan he cam, him happede *par chaunce*,
That alle the grettest that were of that lond
Playing at hasard in Corinthe he them fond.
For the which sighte, as soone as it might be,
He stole him hom agein to his contree,
And saide ther, " I wil nought lose my name,
I wil not take on me so gret diffame,
You for to allie unto no hasardoures.
Sende ye other wiser ambasidoures,
For by my trothe, me were rather dye,
Than I you sholde to hasardours allye.
For ye, that be so glorious in honoúres,
Shal not allien you with hasardoures,
As by my wil, nor as by my tretee."
This wise philosóphre thus sayd he.

Loke eek that to the king Demetrius
The king of Parthes, as the book saith us
Sent him a paire dice of gold in scorn,
For he had usèd hasard ther to-forn;
For which he held his glory and his renoun
At no value or reputacioun.
Lordes maye fynden other maner play
Honest y-nough to dryve away the day.

Now wil I speke of othes fals and grete
A word or tuo, as other bookes trete.
Gret swering is a thing abhominable,
And fals swering is more reprovable.
The hyhe God forbad sweryng at al,
Witnes on Mathew; but in special
Of sweryng saith the holy Jeremye,
Thou shalt say sooth thin othes, and not lye;
And swere in judgment, and in rightwisnes;
But ydel sweryng is a cursednes.
Bihold and see, ther in the firste table
Of hihe Goddes heste honurable,
How that the secounde heste of him is this;
Tak not in vaine Goddes name amys.
Lo, he rather forbedith such sweryng,
Than homicide, or many a corsed thing.
I say that in the order thus it stondith;

This knoweth he that the hestes understondeth.
How that the second hest of God is that.
And forthermore, I wil the telle it flat,
The vengance shal not parte fro his hous,
That of his othes is outrageous.
" By Goddis precious hert, and by his nayles,
And by the blood of Christ, that is in Hayles,
Seven is my chaunce, and also five and three!
By Goddes armes, if thou falsly play,
This daggere shal thorough thin herte go!"
This fruyt cometh of the cursed bones tuo,
Forswering, ire, falsnes, homicide.
Now for the love of Crist that for us dyde,
Leve ye youre othis, bothe gret and smale.
But, sirs, now wil I tellen forth my tale.
These rioters, these three, of which I telle,
Longe before prime had rongen eny belle,
Were set them in a tavern for to drynke;
And as thay satte, thay herd a belle clinke
Bifore a corps, was caried to the grave;
That oon of them gan calle unto his knave,
" Go out," quoth he, " and axe redily,
What corps is that, that passeth here forthby;
And loke that thou reporte his name wel."
" Sir," quoth he, " but that nedeth never a del;
It was me told ere ye com heer tuo houres;
He was, pardy, an old feláw of youres,
And sodeinly he was i-slayn to night;
For-dronk as he sat on his bench upright,
Ther com a privy theef, men clepen Deth,
That is this contree al the peple slayeth;
And with his spere he smot his hert a-tuo,
And went his way withoute wordes mo.
He hath a thousand slayn this pestilence.
And, maister, ere ye come in his presence,
Me thinketh that it is ful necessarie,
For to be war of such an adversarie;
Be redy for to meete him evermore.
Thus taughte me my dame, I say nomore."
" By seinte Mary!" sayde the taverner,
" The child saith soth; for he hath slayn this yeer,
Hence over a myle, withinne a gret villáge,

Bothe man and womman, child, peasánt, and
page;
I trowe his habitacioun be there.
To be avysèd gret wisdom it were,
Ere that he dede a man that dishonoúr."
"Yea, Goddis armes!" quoth this ryottour,
"Is it such peril with him for to meete?
I shal him seeke by way and eek by strete,
I make avow to Goddis digne blood!
Herkne, felaws, we three be stout and good;
Let ech of us hold up his hond to other,
And ech of us bycome the others brother,
And we wil slee this false traitour Deth;
He shal be slayne, that so many sleeth,
By Goddis dignetee ere it be night!"
Togider have these three their trothes plight
To lyve and deye ech of them with the other,
As though he were his oune sworne brother.
And up thay starten, al dronke in this rage,
And forth thay go towardes that villáge,
Of which the taverner hath spoke biforn,
And many a grisly oth than have thay sworn,
And Cristes blessed body thay to-rente,
Deth shal be deed, if that they may him hente.
Right as thay wolde have tornèd over a style,
When thai have goon nought fully half a myle,
An old man and a pore with them mette.
This olde man ful mekely them grette,
And saide thus, "Lordynges, God you see!"
The proudest of the ryotoures three
Answerd agein, "What, carle, with sory grace,
Why art thou al for-wrappèd save thi face?
Whi lyvest thou longe in so gret an age?"
This olde man gan loke on his viságe
And saide thus, "For that I can not fynde
A man, though that I walkèd into Inde,
Neither in citee noon, or in villáge,
That wil exchaunge his youthe for myn age;
And therfore moot I have myn age stille
As longe tyme as it is Goddes wille.
And Deth, allas! ne wil not have my lif.
Thus walk I lik a resteless caytif,
And on the ground, which is my modres gate,

I knokke with my staf, erly and late,
And saye, ' Deere moder, let me in
Lo, how I wane, flesh and blood and skyn,
Allas! when shal my boones be at rest?
Moder, to you wil I give al my chest,
That in my chamber longe tyme hath be,
Yea, for an haire shroud to wrap-in me.'
But yet to me she wil not do that grace,
For which ful pale and withered is my face.
But, sirs, to you it is no curtesye
To speke unto an old man vilonye,
Save he trespás in word or else in dede.
In holy writ ye may your self wel rede,
Bifore an old man, hoar upon his hede,
Ye shold arise; wherefor I you bid,
Do not unto an old man more harm now,
No more than ye wolde men dede unto you
In age, if that ye may so long abyde.
And God be with you, wherso ye go or ryde!
I moot go thider where I have to go."
" Nay, olde cherl, by God! thou shalt not so,"
Sayde that other hasardour anon;
" Thou partist nought so lightly, by seint John!
Thou spake right now of thilke traitour Deth,
That in this contree alle oure frendes slayeth;
Have here my troth, thou art of his a spy;
Tel wher he is, or else thou shalt dye,
By God and by that holy sacrament!
For sothly thou art oon of his assent
To slay us yonge folk, thou false theef."
" Now, sirs, then if that you be so leef
To fynde Deth, torn up this croked way,
For in that grove I laft him, by my fay,
Under a tree, and ther he wil abyde;
Nor for your boast he wil him no thing hyde.
See ye that oak? right ther ye shal him fynde.
God save you, that bought agein mankynde,
And you amend." Thus sayde this olde man,
And each of these riotoures ran,
Til thay come to the tree, and ther thay founde
Of florins fyn of gold y-coynèd rounde,
Wel nygh a seven busshels, as they thoughte.
No lenger thenne to fynde Deth thay soughte.

But ech of them so glad was of that sighte,
For that the florens so faire were and brighte
That doun thay sette them by that precious hord.
The yongest of them spak the firste word.
" Bretheren," quoth he, " take keep what I shal saye;
My witte is gret, though that I dice and playe.
This tresour hath fortúne to us yiven
In mirth and jolytee our lif to lyven,
And lightly as it comth, so wil we spende.
Ey, Goddis precious dignitee, who wende
To day, that we shuld have so fair a grace?
But mighte this gold be caried from this place
Hom to myn hous, or else hom unto youres,
(For wel I wot that this gold is nought oures),
Than were we in hey felicitee.
But trewely by day it may not be;
Men wolde saye that we were theves stronge,
And for oure tresour do us for to honge.
This tresour moste caried be by nighte
As wysly and as slyly as it mighte.
Wherfore I say, that cut among us alle
Be drawn, and let see wher the cut wil falle;
And he that hath the cut, with herte boon
Shal runne to the toun, and that ful soon,
To bring us bred and wyn ful privily;
And tuo of us shal kepe subtilly
This tresour wel; and if he will not tarie,
Whan it is night, we wil this tresour carie
By oon assent, whereas we liketh best."
The oon of them the cut brought in his fist,
And bad them drawe and loke wher it wil falle;
And it fel on the yongest of them alle;
And forth toward the toun he went anon.
And soone as he was from the rest agoon,
The oon of them spak thus unto the other;
" Thou knowest wel thou art my sworne brother.
Thy profyt wil I telle thee anon.
Thou knowest wel our felaw is agon,
And here is gold, and that ful gret plentee,
That shal departed be among us three.
But nonetheles, if I can shape it so,

That it departed were bitwix us tuo,
Hadde I not doon a frendes turn to thee?"
That other answered, "How may that wel be?
He wot wel that the gold is with us tway.
What shulde we than do? or what schuld we
say?"
"Shal it be counsail?" sayde the ferste shrewe,
"And I shal telle thee in wordes fewe
What we shal do, and bringe it wel aboute."
"I graunte," quoth that other, "withoute doute,
That by my trothe I wil thee nought bytraye."
"Now," quoth the first, "thou knowest wel
we be twaye,
And two of us shal strenger be than oon."
Loke, whanne he is y-sett, and that anon,
Arys, as though thou woldest with him pleye;
And I shal stikke him thurgh the sydes tweye,
Whiles thou strogelest with him as in game,
And with thi dagger loke thou do the same;
And than shal al the gold departed be,
My dere friend, bitwixe thee and me;
Than may we two oure lustes al fulfille,
And play at dice right at our owne wille."
And thus accorded be these shrewes twayn,
To sley the thirdde, as ye have herd me sayn.
This yongest, which that wente to the toun,
Ful fast in hert he rollith up and doun
The beautee of the florins newe and brighte;
"O Lord!" quoth he, "if so were that I mighte
Have al this gold unto my self allone,
Ther is no man that lyveth under the trone
Of God, that shulde lyve so mery as I."
And atte last the feend, oure enemy,
Put in his thought, that he shulde poysoun buy
With which he mighte sley his felawes tweye.
For-why, the feend fond him in such lyvynge,
That he hadde leve to sorrow him to brynge.
For this was utterly his ful entente
To sley them bothe, and never to repente.
And forth he goth, no lenger wold he tarye,
Into the toun unto a pothecarye,
And prayèd him that he him wolde selle
Som poysoun, that he might his rattis quelle.

And eek ther was a polecat in his farm,
That, as he sayde, his capons dide harm;
And said he wold him quell, if that he mighte,
The vermyn, that destroyed them by nighte.
The apothecary answerd: "Thou shalt have
A thing that, also God my soule save,
In al this world ther is no créatúre,
That ete or dronk had of this cónfectúre,
Nought but the mountaunce of a corn of whete,
That he shuld not his lif anon for-lete;
Yea, die he shal, and that in lesse while,
Than thou wilt go a pace beyond a myle,
The poysoun is so strong and violent."
This cursed man hath in his hond i-hent
This poysoun in a box, and then he ran
Into the nexte stret unto a man,
And borrowed of him large botels three;
And in the two his poysoun pourèd he;
The third he kepèd clene for his own,
For al the night he mente to the toun
To cary al the gold out of that place.
And whan this riotour, with sory grace,
Hath filled with wyn his grete botels three,
To his felaws agein repaireth he.

What nedith it therof to sermoun more?
For right as thay hadde cast his deth bifore,
Right so thay have him slayn, and that anon.
And whan this was i-don, thus spak that oon:
"Now let us drynk and sitte, and make us mery
And afterward we wil his body bery."
And al at once it happèd him *par cas*,
To take the botel where the poysoun was,
And drank, and gaf his felaw drink also,
For which anon thay dyèd bothe tuo.
But certes I suppose that Avycen
Wrot never in that book, that men call Fen,
More wonder sorrows of empoisonyng,
Than hadde these wrecches tuo at their endyng.
Thus endid be these homicides tuo,
And eek the fals empoysoner also.

O cursed synne ful of cursednesse!
O traytorous homicide! O wikkednesse!
O glotony, luxúrie, and hasardrye!

Thou blásphemour of Crist with vilanye,
And othes grete, of usage and of pride!
Allas! mankynde, how may it bytyde,
That to thy créatoúr, which that thee wroughte,
And with his precious herte-blood thee boughte,
Thou art so fals and so unkynde, allas!
"Now, good men, God forgeve you your trespás,
And ware you fro the synne of avarice.
Myn holy pardoun may you alle suffise,
So that ye give nobles or coin sterling,
Or else a silver spone, a broche, or ryng,
Bow down your hedes under this holy bulle.
Come forth, ye wyves, and offer your woolle;
Your names I entre here in my rolle anon;
Into the blis of heven shal ye goon;
I you assoile by myn high power,
If ye wil offre, as clene and eek als clere
As ye were born. And, sirs, lo, thus I preche;
And Jhesu Crist, that is oure soules leech,
So graunte you his pardoun to receyve;
For that is best, I wil not you disceyve.
But, sirs, one word forgat I in my tale;
I have reliks and pardoun without faile,
As fair as eny man in Engelond,
Which were me given by the popes hond.
If eny of you wil of devocioun
Offren, and have myn absolucioun,
Come forth anon, and kneel ye here adoun,
And ye shal have here al my pardoun.
Or else take pardoun, as ye wende,
Al newe and fressh at every townes ende,
So that ye offre alway new and newe
Nobles and pens, which that be good and trewe.
It is an honour to every that is heer,
That ye may have a suffisaunt pardoner
To assoil you in the contree as ye ryde,
For áventúres which that may bytyde.
For of you al ther may falle oon, or tuo,
Doun off his hors, and breke his nekke a-tuo.
Loke, such a suretee is to you alle
That I am in your felawschip i-falle,
That may assoyle you bothe more or lesse,

Whan that the soule shal fro the body passe.
I counsel that oure hoste shal bygynne,
For he is most envoliped in synne.
Com forth, sire ost, and offer first anon,
And thou shalt kisse the reliques every one,
Yea, for a grote; unbocle anone thi purs."
"Nay, nay," quoth he, "than have I Cristes curs!
Let be," quoth he, "that shal not I, for one.
Thou woldest make me kisse thin olde bone,
Thou and thy reliks are not worth a hen."
This Pardoner answerde nat again;
So wroth he was, he wolde no word saye.
"Now," quoth oure Host, "I wil no lenger playe
With thee, nor with no other angry man."
But right anon this worthy Knight bygan,
(Whan that he saw that al the peple laugh)
"No more of this, for it is right y-nough.
Sir pardoner, be glad and mery of cheere;
And ye, sir host, that be to me so deere,
I pray you that ye kisse the pardoner;
And pardoner, I pray you draw you near,
And as we dede, let us laugh and playe."
Anon thay kisse, and riden forth their waye.

THE TALE OF THE WYF OF BATHE

"Experience, through no auctoritee
Were in this world, were right ynough for me
To speke of wo that is in mariage,
For, lordynges, since I twelf yeer was of age,
Y-thonked be God that is eterne alive
Housbondes at chirche dore I have had fyve:
For I so ofte have y-wedded be;
And alle were worthi men in there degree.
But me was told certayn not long agone is,
That since that Christ had never gone but once
To weddyng in the Cane of Galilee
That by the same example taught he me,

That I shold wedded be but oonly once.
Herken, eek, what a sharp word for the nonce.
Beside a welle, Jhesus, God and man,
Spak in reprove of the Samaritan:
'Thou hast y-had fyve housbondes,' quoth he,
And that same man the which that hath now thee
Is not thyn housbonde;' thus seyde he certeyn.
What that he mente ther by, I can not sayn;
But that I axe why the fifte man
Was noon housbond to the Samaritan
How many might she have in mariage?
Yet herd I never tellen in myn age
Upon this number deffinicioun.
Men may divine and glosen up and doun.
But wel I wot, withouten eny lye,
God bad us for to wax and multiplie;
That gentil tixt can I wel understonde.
Ek wel I wot, he sayde, myn housebonde
Schulde lete fader and moder, and folwe me;
But of no noumber mencioun made he,
Of bygamye or of octogomye;
Why schulde men speken of that vilonye?
Lo hier the wise kyng daun Salamon,
I trow he hadde wifes mo than oon,
As wolde God it were leful unto me
To be refreisshed half so oft as he!
Which gift of God had he for alle his wyvys!
No man hath such, that in the world on lyve is.
God wot, this nobil king, as to my wit,
The firste night hadde many a mery fit
With ech of hem, so wel was him on lyve.
I-blessid be God that I have weddid fyve!
Welcome the sixte whan that ever he schal!
For-sothe I nyl not kepe me chast in al;
Whan myn housbond is fro the world i-gon,
Som cristne man schal wedde me anoon,
For than thapostil saith that I am fre
To wedde, a goddis half, wher so it be.
He saith, that to be weddid is no synne;
Bet is to be weddid than to brynne.
What recchith me what folk sayn vilonye
Of schrewid Lameth, or of his bigamye?

I wot wel Abram was an holy man,
And Jacob eek, as ferforth as I can,
And ech of hem hadde wyves mo than tuo,
And many another holy man also.
Whan sawe ye in eny maner age
That highe God defendide mariage
By expres word? I pray you tellith me;
Or wher commaunded he virginité?
I wot as wel as ye, it is no drede,
Thapostil, when he spekth of maydenhede,
He sayde, that precept therof had he noon;
Men may counseil a womman to be oon,
But counselyng nys no comaundement;
He put it in our owne juggement.
For hadde God comaundid maydenhede,
Than had he dampnyd weddyng with the dede;
And certes, if ther were no seed i-sowe,
Virginité whereon schuld it growe?
Poul ne dorste not comaunde atte leste
A thing, of which his maister yaf non heste.
The dart is set upon virginité,
Cach who-so may, who rennith best let se.
But this word is not taken of every wight,
But ther as God list yive it of his might.
I wot wel that thapostil was a mayde,
But natheless, though that he wrot or sayde,
He wolde that every wight were such as he,
Al nys but counseil unto virginité.
And for to ben a wyf he gaf me leve,
Of indulgence, so nys it to repreve
To wedde me, if that my make deye,
Withoute excepcioun of bigamye;
Al were it good no womman for to touche,
(He mente in his bed or in his couche)
For peril is bothe fuyr and tow to assemble;
Ye knowe what this ensample wolde resemble.
This is al and som, he holdith virginité
More parfit than weddying in frelté;
(Frelté clepe I, but-if that he and sche
Wolde leden al her lif in chastité).
I graunt it wel, I have noon envye,
Though maidenhede preferre bygamye;
It liketh hem to be clene in body and gost;

Of myn estate I nyl make no bost.
For wel ye wot, a lord in his household
He nath not every vessel ful of gold;
Som ben of tre, and don her lord servise.
God clepeth folk to him in sondry wise,
And every hath of God a propre yifte,
Som this, som that, as him likith to schifte.
Virginité is gret perfeccioun,
And continens eek with gret devocioun;
But Christ, that of perfeccioun is welle,
Bad nought every wight schulde go and selle
Al that he had, and yive it to the pore,
And in such wise folwe him and his fore.
He spak to hem that wolde lyve parfytly,
But, lordyngs, by your leve, that am not I;
I wol bystowe the flour of myn age
In the actes and in the fruytes of mariage.
Tel me also, to what conclusioun
Were membres maad of generacioun,
And of so parfit wise, and why y-wrought?
Trustith right wel, they were nought maad for nought.
Glose who-so wol, and say bothe up and doun,
That thay were made for purgacioun
Of uryn, and oure bothe thinges smale
Were eek to knowe a femel fro a male;
And for non other cause:—say ye no?
Thexperiens wot wel it is not so.
So that these clerkes ben not with me wrothe,
I say this, that thay makid ben for bothe,
That is to saye, for office and for ease
Of engendrure, ther we God nought displease.
Why schulde men elles in her bokes sette,
That man schal yelde to his wif his dette?
Now wherwith schuld he make his payement
If he ne used his sely instrument?
Than were thay maad upon a creature
To purge uryn, and eek for engendrure.
But I say not that every wight is holde,
That hath such harneys as I to you tolde,
To gon and usen hem in engendrure;
Than schulde men take of chastité no cure.
Crist was a mayde, and schapen as a man.

And many a seynt, sin that the world bygan,
Yet lyvede thay ever in parfyt chastité.
I nyl envye no virginité.
Let hem be bred of pured whete seed,
And let us wyves eten barly breed.
And yet with barly bred, men telle can,
Oure Lord Jhesu refreisschide many a man.
In such astaat as God hath cleped ous
I wil persever, I am not precious;
In wyfhode I wil use myn instrument
Als frely as my maker hath me it sent.
If I be daungerous, God yive me sorwe,
Myn housbond schal han it at eve and at morwe,
Whan that him list com forth and pay his dette.
An housbond wol I have, I wol not lette,
Which schal be bothe my dettour and my thral,
And have his tribulacioun withal
Upon his fleissch, whil that I am his wyf.
I have the power duryng al my lif
Upon his propre body, and not he;
Right thus thapostil told it unto me.
And bad oure housbondes for to love us wel;
Al this sentence me likith every del."

Up starte the pardoner, and that anoon;
"Now, dame," quod he, "by God and by seint Jon,
Ye ben a noble prechour in this caas.
I was aboute to wedde a wif, allaas!
What? schal I buy it on my fleisch so deere?
Yit had I lever wedde no wyf to yere!"
"Abyd," quod sche, "my tale is not bygonne.
Nay, thou schalt drinke of another tonne
Er that I go, schal savere wors than ale.
And whan that I have told the forth my tale
Of tribulacioun in mariage,
Of which I am expert in al myn age,
This is to saye, myself hath ben the whippe,
Than might thou chese whethir thou wilt sippe
Of thilke tonne, that I schal abroche.
Be war of it, er thou to neigh approche.
For I schal telle ensamples mo than ten:
Who-so that nyl be war by other men
By him schal other men corrected be.

The same wordes writeth Ptholomé,
Rede in his Almagest, and tak it there."
" Dame, I wolde praye you, if that youre wille
were,"
Sayde this pardoner, " as ye bigan,
Tel forth youre tale, and sparith for no man,
Tecche us yonge men of youre practike."
" Gladly," quod sche, " syns it may yow like.
But that I pray to al this companye,
If that I speke after my fantasie,
As taketh nought agreef of that I saye,
For myn entente is nought but to playe.
" Now, sires, now wol I telle forth my tale.
As ever mote I drinke wyn or ale,
I schal saye soth of housbondes that I hadde,
As thre of hem were goode, and tuo were badde.
Tuo of hem were goode, riche, and olde;
Unnethes mighte thay the statute holde,
In which that thay were bounden unto me;
Ye wot wel what I mene of this pardé!
As help me God, I laugh whan that I thinke,
How pitously on night I made hem swynke,
But, by my fay! I told of it no stoor;
Thay hadde me yive her lond and her tresor,
Me nedith not no lenger doon diligence
To wynne her love or doon hem reverence.
They lovede me so wel, by God above!
That I tolde no deynte of her love.
A wys womman wol bysi hir ever in oon
To gete hir love, there sche hath noon.
But synnes I had hem holly in myn hond,
And synnes thay hadde me yeven al her lond,
What schuld I take keep hem for to please,
But it were for my profyt, or myn ease?
I sette hem so on werke, by my fay!
That many a night they songen weylaway.
The bacoun was nought fet for hem, I trowe,
That som men fecche in Essex at Donmowe.
I governed hem so wel after my lawe,
That ech of hem ful blisful was and fawe
To bringe me gaye thinges fro the faire.
Thay were ful glad whan I spak to hem faire;
For, God it woot, I chidde hem spitously.

Now herkeneth how I bar me proprely.
Ye wise wyves, that can understonde,
Thus scholde ye speke, and bere hem wrong on honde;
For half so boldely can ther no man
Swere and lye as a womman can.
(I say not by wyves that ben wise,
But-if it be whan thay ben mysavise.)
I-wis a wif, if that sche can hir good,
Schal beren him on hond the cow is wood,
And take witnes on hir oughne mayde
Of hire assent; but herkenith how I sayde.
See, olde caynard, is this thin array?
Why is my neghebores wif so gay?
Sche is honoured overal ther sche goth;
I sitte at hom, I have no thrifty cloth.
What dostow at my neighebores hous?
Is sche so fair? what, artow amorous?
What roune ye with hir maydenes? *benedicite,*
Sir olde lecchour, let thi japes be.
And if I have a gossib, or a frend
Withouten gilt, thou chidest as a fend,
If that I walk or play unto his hous.
Thou comest hom as dronken as a mous.
And prechist on thy bench, with evel preef,
Thou saist to me, it is a gret meschief
To wedde a pover womman, for costage;
And if that sche be riche and of parage,
Thanne saist thou, that it is a tormentrie
To suffre hir pride and hir malencolie.
And if that sche be fair, thou verray knave,
Thou saist that every holour wol hir have;
Sche may no while in chastité abyde,
That is assayled thus on eche syde.
Thou saist that som folk desire us for riches,
Som for our schap, and som for our fairnes,
And some, for that sche can synge and daunce,
And some for gentilesse or daliaunce,
Som for hir handes and hir armes smale:
Thus goth al to the devel by thi tale.
Thou saist, men may nought kepe a castel wal,
It may so be biseged over al.
And if sche be foul, thanne thou saist, that sche

Coveitith every man that sche may se;
For, as a spaynel, sche wol on him lepe.
Til that sche fynde som man hire to chepe.
Ne noon so gray a goos goth in the lake,
As sayest thou, wol be withouten make.
And saist, it is an hard thing for to wolde
Thing that no man wol, his willes, holde.
Thus seistow, lorel, whan thou gost to bedde,
And that no wys man nedith for to wedde,
Ne no man that entendith unto hevene.
With wilde thunder dynt and fuyry levene
Mote thi wickede necke be to-broke!
Thou saist, that droppyng hous, and eek smoke,
And chydyng wyves maken men to fle
Out of here oughne hous; a, *benedicite*,
What eylith such an old man for to chyde?
Thou seist, we wyves woln oure vices hide,
Til we ben weddid, and than we wil hem schewe.
Wel may that be a proverbe of a schrewe.
Thou saist, that assen, oxen, and houndes,
Thay ben assayed at divers stoundes,
Basyns, lavours eek, er men hem bye,
Spones, stooles, and al such housbondrie,
Also pottes, clothes, and array;
But folk of wyves maken non assay,
Til thay ben weddid, olde dotard schrewe!
And thanne, saistow, we woln oure vices schewe.
Thou saist also, that it displesith me
But-if that thou wilt praysen my beauté,
And but thou pore alway in my face,
And clepe me faire dame in every place;
And but thou make a fest on thilke day
That I was born, and make me freisch and gay;
And but thou do my norice honoure,
And to my chamberer withinne my boure,
And to my fadres folk, and myn allies:
Thus saistow, olde barel ful of lies!
And yit of oure apprentys Jankyn,
For his crisp her, schynyng as gold so fyn.
And for he squiereth me up and doun,
Yet hastow caught a fals suspeccioun;
I nyl him nought, though thou were deed to
morwe.

But tel me wherfor hydestow with sorwe
The keyes of thy chist away fro me?
It is my good as wel as thin, pardé.
" What! wenest thou make an ydiot of oure dame?
Now by that lord that cleped is seint Jame,
Thow schalt not bothe, though thou were wood,
Be maister of my body and of my good;
That oon thou schalt forgo maugré thin yen!
What helpith it on me tenqueren or espien?
I trowe thou woldest lokke me in thy chest.
Thou scholdist say, ' wif, go wher the lest;
Take youre disport; I nyl lieve no talis;
I know yow for a trewe wif, dame Alis.'
We loveth no man, that takith keep or charge
Wher that we goon; we love to be at large.
" Of alle men i-blessed most he be
The wise astrologe daun Ptholomé,
That saith this proverbe in his Almagest:
Of alle men his wisedom is highest,
That rekkith not who hath the world in honde
By this proverbe thou schalt understonde,
Have thou ynough, what thar the recch or care
How merily that other folkes fare?
For certes, olde dotard, with your leve,
Ye schul have queynte right ynough at eve.
He is to gret a nygard that wol werne
A man to light a candel at his lanterne;
He schal have never the lasse light, pardé.
Have thou ynough, the thar not pleyne the.
" Thou saist also, that if we make us gay
With clothing and with precious array,
That it is peril of our chastité.
And yit, with sorwe, thou most enforce the,
And saye these wordes in thapostles name:
In abyt maad with chastité and schame
Ye wommen schuld apparayle yow, quod he,
And nought with tressed her, and gay perré.
As perles, ne with golde, ne clothis riche.
After thy text, ne after thin rubriche,
I wol nought wirche as moche as a gnat.
Thow saist thus that I was lik a cat;
For who-so wolde senge the cattes skyn,

Than wolde the catte duellen in his in;
And if the cattes skyn be slyk and gay,
Sche wol not duelle in house half a day,
But forth sche wil, er eny day be dawet,
To schewe hir skyn, and goon a caterwrawet.
This is to say, if I be gay, sir schrewe,
I wol renne aboute, my borel for to schewe.
Sir olde fool, what helpith the to aspien?
Though thou praydest Argus with his hundrid yen
To be my wardecorps, as he can best,
In faith he schulde not kepe me but-if me lest;
Yit couthe I make his berd, though queynte he be.
Thou saydest eek, that ther ben thinges thre,
The whiche thinges troublen al this erthe,
And that no wight may endure the ferthe.
O leve sire schrewe, Jhesu schorte thy lif!
Yit prechestow, and saist, an hateful wif
I-rekened is for oon of these meschaunces.
Ben ther noon other of thy resemblaunces
That ye may liken youre parables unto,
But-if a cely wyf be oon of tho?
Thow likenest wommannes love to helle,
To bareyn lond, ther water may not duelle.
Thou likenest it also to wild fuyr;
The more it brenneth, the more it hath desir
To consume every thing, that brent wol be.
Thou saist, right as wormes schenden a tre,
Right so a wif schendith hir housebonde;
This knowen tho that ben to wyves bonde.
" Lordynges, right thus, as ye han understonde,
Bar I styf myn housebondes on honde,
That thus thay sayde in her dronkenesse;
And al was fals, but that I took witnesse
On Jankyn, and upon my nece also.
O Lord, the peyne I dede hem, and the wo,
Ful gulteles, by Goddes swete pyne;
For as an hors, I couthe bothe bite and whyne;
I couthe pleyne, and yet I was in the gilt,
Or elles I hadde often tyme be spilt.
Who-so first cometh to the mylle, first grynt;
I pleynede first, so was oure werre stynt.

Thay were ful glad to excuse hem ful blyve
Of thing, that thay never agilt in her lyve.
And wenches wold I beren hem on honde,
Whan that for-seek thay mighte unnethes stonde,
Yit tykeled I his herte for that he
Wende I had of him so gret chiereté.
I swor that al my walkyng out a nyghte
Was for to aspie wenches that he dighte.
Under that colour had I many a mirthe.
For al such witte is yeven us of birthe;
Deceipt wepyng, spynnyng, God hath give
To wymmen kyndely whil that thay may lyve.
And thus of o thing I avaunte me,
At thende I hadde the best in ech degré,
By sleight or fors, or of som maner thing,
As by continuel murmur or chidyng,
Namly on bedde, hadden thay meschaunce,
Ther wolde I chide, and do hem no pleasaunce;
I wold no lenger in the bed abyde,
If that I felt his arm over my syde,
Til he hadde maad his raunsoun unto me,
Than wold I suffre him doon his nyceté.
And therfor every man this tale telle,
Wynne who-so may, for al is for to selle;
With empty hond men may noon haukes lure,
For wynnyng wold I al his lust endure,
And make me a feyned appetyt,
And yit in bacoun had I never delyt;
That made me that ever I wold hem chyde.
For though the pope hadde seten hem bisyde,
I nolde not spare hem at her oughne bord,
For, by my trouthe, I quyt hem word for word.
Als help me verray God omnipotent,
Though I right now schulde make my testament,
I owe hem nought a word, that it nys quitte,
I brought it so aboute by my witte,
That they moste yeve it up, as for the best,
Or ellis hadde we never ben in rest.
For though he loked as a grym lyoun,
Yit schuld he fayle of his conclusioun.
Than wold I saye, ' now, goode leefe, tak keep,
How mekly lokith Wilkyn our scheep!

Com ner, my spouse, let me ba thy cheke.
Ye schulde be al pacient and meke,
And have a swete spiced consciens,
Siththen ye preche so of Jopes paciens.
Suffreth alway, syns ye so wel can preche,
And but ye do, certeyn we schul yow teche
That it is fair to have a wyf in pees.
On of us tuo mot bowe douteles;
And, siththen man in more resonable
Than womman is, ye moste be suffrable.
What aylith yow thus for to grucche and grone?
Is it for ye wold have my queynt allone?
Why, tak it al; lo, have it every del
Peter! I schrewe yow but ye love it wel.
For if I wolde selle my bele chose,
I couthe walk as freisch as eny rose,
But I wol kepe it for youre owne toth.
Ye ben to blame, by God, I say yow soth!'
Such maner wordes hadde we on honde.

"Now wol I speke of my fourth housbonde.
My fourthe housbond was a revelour,
This is to say, he had a paramour,
And I was yong, and ful of ragerie,
Stiborn and strong, and joly as a pye.
Lord! how couthe I daunce to an harpe smale,
And synge y-wys as eny nightyngale,
Whan I hadde dronke a draught of swete wyn.
Metillius, the foule cherl, the swyn,
That with a staf byraft his wyf hir lyf
For sche drank wyn, though I hadde ben his wif,
Ne schuld he nought have daunted me fro drinke;
And after wyn on Venus most I thinke,
For al-so siker as cold engendrith hayl,
A likorous mouth most have a licorous tail.
In wymmen vinolent is no defens,
This knowen lecchours by experiens.
But, lord Crist, whan that it remembrith me
Upon my youthe, and on my jolité,
It tikelith me aboute myn herte-roote!
Unto this day it doth myn herte boote,
That I have had my world as in my tyme.
But age, allas! that al wol envenyme,
Hath me bireft my beauté and my pith;

Let go, farwel, the devyl go therwith.
The flour is goon, ther nis no more to telle,
The bran, as I best can, now mot I selle.
But yit to be mery wol I fonde.
" Now wol I telle of my fourth housbonde.
I say, I had in herte gret despyt,
That he of eny other hadde delit;
But he was quit, by God, and by seint Joce;
I made him of the same woode a croce,
Nought of my body in no foul manere,
But certeynly I made folk such chere,
That in his owne grees I made him frie
For anger, and for verraie jalousie.
By God, in erthe I was his purgatory,
For which I hope his soule be in glory.
For, God it wot, he sat ful stille and song,
Whan that his scho ful bitterly him wrong
Ther was no wight, sauf God and he, that wiste
In many wyse how sore I him twiste.
He dyede whan I cam fro Jerusalem,
And lith i-grave under the roode-bem;
Al is his tombe nought so curious
As was the sepulcre of him Darius,
Which that Appellus wroughte so subtily.
It nys but wast to burie him preciously.
Let him farwel, God yive his soule rest,
He is now in his grave and in his chest.
" Now of my fifte housbond wol I telle;
God let his soule never come in helle!
And yet was he to me the moste schrewe,
That fele I on my ribbes alle on rewe,
And ever schal, unto myn endyng day.
But in oure bed he was so freisch and gay,
And therwithal so wel he couthe me glose,
When that he wolde have my *bele chose*,
That, though he hadde me bete on every boon,
He couthe wynne my love right anoon.
I trowe, I loved him beste, for that he
Was of his love daungerous to me.
We wymmen han, if that I schal nought lye,
In this matier a queynte fantasie.
Wayte, what thyng we maye not lightly have,
Therafter wol we sonnest crie and crave.

Forbeed us thing, and that desire we;
Pres on us fast, and thanne wol we fle.
With daunger outen alle we oure ware;
Greet pres at market makith deer chaffare,
And to greet chep is holden at litel pris;
This knowith every womman that is wys.
My fyfte housbond, God his soule blesse,
Which that I took for love and no richesse,
He som tyme was a clerk of Oxenford,
And hadde left scole, and went at hoom to borde
With my gossib, duellyng in our toun:
God have hir soule, hir name was Alisoun.
Sche knew myn herte and my privite
Bet than oure parisch prest, so mot I the.
To hir bywreyed I my counseil al;
For hadde myn housbond pissed on a wal,
Or don a thing that schuld have cost his lif,
To hir, and to another worthy wyf,
And to my neece, which I lovede wel,
I wold have told his counseil every del.
And so I dide ful ofte, God it woot,
That made his face ofte reed and hoot
For verry schame, and blamyd himself, that he
Hadde told to me so gret a priveté.
And so byfel that oones in a Lente,
(So ofte tyme to my gossib I wente,
For ever yit I lovede to be gay,
And for to walk in March, Averil, and May
From hous to hous, to here sondry talis)
That Jankyn clerk, and my gossib dame Alis,
And I myself, into the feldes wente.
Myn housbond was at Londone al that Lente;
I hadde the bettir leysir for to pleye,
And for to see, and eek for to be seye
Of lusty folk; what wist I wher my grace
Was schapen for to be, or in what place?
Therfore I made my visitaciouns
To vigiles, and to processiouns,
To prechings eek, and to this pilgrimages,
To pleyes of miracles, and mariages,
And wered upon my gay scarlet gytes.
These wormes, these moughtes, ne these mytes
Upon my perel fretith hem never a deel,

And wostow why? for thay were used wel.
Now wol I telle forth what happide me:—
I say, that in the feldes walkide we,
Til trewely we hadde such daliaunce
This clerk and I, that of my purvyaunce
I spak to him, and sayde how that he,
If I were wydow, schulde wedde me.
For certeynly, I say for no bobaunce,
Yit was I never withouten purveyaunce
Of mariage, ne of no thinges eeke;
I hold a mouses hert not worth a leek,
That hath but oon hole to sterte to,
And if that faile, than is al i-do.
I bare him on honde he hadde enchauntede me;
(My dame taughte me that subtylté)
And eke I sayde, I mete of him alle nyght,
He wolde have slayne me, as I laye uprighte,
And alle my bedde was fulle of vereye blode;
Butte yette I hope that ye shulle do me gode;
For blode betokenethe golde, as me was taughte;
And alle was false, I dremede of hitt righte naughte,
Butte as I followede ay my dames lore,
As welle of that as of other thinges more.
But now, sir, let me se, what I schal sayn;
A ha! by God, I have my tale agayn.
"Whan that my fourthe housbond was on bere,
I wept algate and made a sory cheere,
As wyves mooten, for it is usage;
And with my kerchief coverede my visage;
But, for that I was purveyed of a make,
I wepte but smal, and that I undertake.
To chirche was myn housbond brought on morwe
With neighebors that for him made sorwe,
And Jankyn oure clerk was oon of tho.
As help me God, whan that I saugh him go
After the beere, me thought he had a paire
Of legges and of feet so clene and faire,
That al myn hert I yaf unto his hold.
He was, I trowe, twenty wynter old,
And I was fourty, if I schal say the sothe,
But yit I had alway a coltis tothe.

Gattothid I was, and that bycom me wel,
I hadde the prynte of seynt Venus sel.
As helpe me God, I was a lusti one.
And faire, and riche, and yong, and wel begone;
And trewly, as myn hosbonde tolde me,
I hadde the beste quoniam that myghte be.
For certis I am al fulli venerian
In felyng, and myn herte alle marcian:
Venus me yaf my lust and licorousnesse.
And Mars yaf me my sturdi hardynesse.
Myn ascent was Taur, and Mars therinne;
Allas, alas, that ever love was synne!
I folwed ay myn inclinacioun
By vertu of my constillacioun:
That made me that I couthe nought withdrawe
My chambre of Venus from a good felawe.
Yet have I a marke of Mars uppon my face,
And also in another pryvé place.
For God so wisse be my salvacion,
I lovyde nevyr bi non discrescion,
But evyr folewed myn owne appetite,
Alle were he schort, long, blak, or white;
I toke no kepe, so that he liked me,
How pore he was, ne eke of what degre.
What schuld I say? but at the monthis ende
This joly clerk Jankyn, that was so heende,
Hath weddid me with gret solempnitee,
And to him yaf I al the londe and fee
That ever was me yive therbifore.
But aftir-ward repentede me ful sore.
He nolde suffre nothing of my list.
By God, he smot me oones with his fist,
For I rent oones out of his book a lef,
That of that strok myn eere wax al deef.
Styborn I was, as is a leones,
And of my tonge a verray jangleres,
And walk I wold, as I hadde don biforn,
Fro hous to hous, although he had it sworn;
For which he ofte tymes wolde preche,
And me of olde Romayn gestes teche.
How he Simplicius Gallus left his wyf,
And hir forsok for terme of al his lyf,
Nought but for open heedid he hir say

Lokyng out at his dore upon a day.
Another Romayn told he me by name,
That, for his wyf was at a somer game
Without his wityng, he forsok hir eeke.
And thanne wold he upon his book seeke
That ilke proverbe of Ecclesiaste,
Wher he comaundith, and forbedith faste,
Man schal not suffre his wyf go roule aboute.
Than wold he saye right thus withouten doubte:
'Who that buyldith his hous al of salwes,
And priketh his blynde hors over the falwes,
And suffrith his wyf to go seken halwes,
Is worthy to ben honged on the galwes.'
But al for nought; I sette nought an hawe
Of his proverbe, ne of his olde sawe;
Ne I wolde not of him corretted be.
I hate him that my vices tellith me,
And so doon mo, God it wot, than I.
This made him with me wood al outerly;
I nolde not forbere him in no cas.
Now wol I saye yow soth, by seint Thomas,
Why that I rent out of the book a leef,
For which he smot me, that I was al def.
He had a book, that gladly night and day
For his desport he wolde rede alway;
" He clepyd it Valerye and Theofrast,
At which book he lough alway ful fast.
And eek thay say her was som tyme a clerk at Rome,
A cardynal, that heet seint Jerome,
That made a book ayens Jovynyan.
In which book eek ther was Tertulyan,
Crisippus, Tortula, and eek Helewys,
That was abbas not fer fro Paris;
And eek the parablis of Salamon,
Ovydes Art, and bourdes many oon;
And alle these were bounde in oo volume.
And every night and day was his custume,
Whan he hadde leysir and vacacioun
From other worldely occupacioun,
To reden in this book of wikked wyves.
He knew of hem mo legendes and lyves,
Than ben of goode wyves in the Bible.

For trustith wel; it is an inpossible,
That any clerk schal speke good of wyves
But-if it be of holy seintes lyves,
Ne of noon other wyfes never the mo.
Who peyntide the leoun, tel me, who?
By God, if wommen hadde writen stories,
As clerkes have withinne her oratories,
Thay wold have write of men more wickidnes,
Than al the mark of Adam may redres.
These children of Mercury and of Venus
Ben in her werkyng ful contrarious
Mercury lovith wisdom and science,
And Venus loveth ryot and dispense.
And for her divers disposicioun,
Ech fallith in otheres exaltacioun.
And thus, God wot, Mercury is desolate
In Pisces, wher Venus is exaltate,
And Venus faylith wher Mercury is reysed.
Therfor no womman of clerkes is preised.
The clerk whan he is old, and may nought do
Of Venus werkis, is not worth a scho;
Than sit he doun, and writ in his dotage,
That wommen can nought kepe here mariage.
But now to purpos, why I tolde the,
That I was beten for a leef, pardé.
Upon a night Jankyn, that was oure sire,
Rad on his book, as he sat by the fyre,
Of Eva first, that for hir wikkidnes,
Was al mankynde brought to wrecchednes,
For whiche that Jhesu Crist himselfe was slayne,
That boughte us with his herte-blood agayne.
Lo here expresse of wommen may ye fynde,
That woman was the loose of alle mankynde.
Tho rad he me how Sampson lest his heris
Slepyng, his lemman kut it with hir scheris,
Thurgh which tresoun lost he bothe his yen.
Tho rad he me, if that I schal not lyen,
Of Ercules, and of his Dejanyre,
That caused him to sette himself on fuyre.
No thing foryat he the care and wo
That Socrates hadde with his wyves tuo;
Now Exantipa caste pisse upon his heed.
This seely man sat stille, as he were deed,

He wyped his heed, no more durst he sayn,
But 'Er thunder stynte ther cometh rayn.'
Of Phasipha, that was the queen of Creete,
For schrewednes him thoughte the tale sweete.
Fy! spek no more, it is a grisly thing,
Of her horribil lust and her likyng.
Of Clydemystra for hir leccherie
That falsly made hir housbond for to dye,
He rad it with ful good devocioun.
He tolde me eek, for what occasioun
Amphiores at Thebes lest his lif;
Myn housbond had a legend of his wyf
Exiphilem, that for an ouche of gold
Hath prively unto the Grekes told
Wher that hir housbond hyd him in a place,
For which he had at Thebes sory grace.
Of Lyma told he me, and of Lucye;
Thay bothe made her housbondes for to dye,
That oon for love, that other was for hate.
Lyma hir housbond on an even late
Empoysond hath, for that sche was his fo;
Lucia licorous loved hir housbond so,
For that he schuld alway upon hir thinke,
Sche yaf him such a maner love-drinke,
That he was deed er it was by the morwe;
And thus algates housbondes hadde sorwe.
Than told he me, how oon Latumyus
Compleigned unto his felaw Arrius,
That in his gardyn growede such a tre,
On which he sayde how that his wyves thre
Honged hemselfe for herte despitous.
'O leve brother,' quod this Arrious,
'Yif me a plont of thilke blessid tre,
And in my gardyn schal it plantid be.'
Of latter date of wyves hath he red
That some han slayn her housbondes in her bed,
And let her lecchour dighten al the night,
Whil that the corps lay in the flor upright;
And som han dryven nayles in her brayn,
Whiles thay sleepe, and thus they han hem slayn;
Som have hem yive poysoun in her drinke;
He spak more harm than herte may bythynke.
And therwithal he knew mo proverbes

Than in this world ther growen gres or herbes.
Better is, quod he, thyn habitacioun
Be with a leoun, or a foul dragoun,
Than with a womman using for to chyde.
Better is, quod he, hihe in the roof abyde,
Than with an angry womman doun in a hous;
Thay ben so wicked and so contrarious,
Thay haten that her housbondes loven ay.
He sayd, a womman cast hir schame away,
Whan sche cast of hir smok; and forthermo,
A fair womman, but sche be chast also,
Is lyk a gold ryng in a sowes nose.
Who wolde wene, or who wolde suppose
The wo that in myn herte was and pyne?
And whan I saugh he nolde never fyne
To reden on this cursed book al night,
Al sodeinly thre leves have I plight
Out of this booke that he had, and eeke
I with my fist so took him on the cheeke,
That in oure fuyr he fal bak-ward adoun.
And he upstert, as doth a wood leoun,
And with his fist he smot me on the hed,
That in the floor I lay as I were deed.
And whan he saugh so stille that I lay,
He was agast, and wold have fled away.
Til atte last out of my swown I brayde.
'O, hastow slayn me, false thef?' I sayde,
'And for my lond thus hastow mourdrid me?
Er I be deed, yit wol I kisse the.'
And ner he cam, and knelith faire adoun,
And sayde, 'Deere suster Alisoun,
As help me God, I schal the never smyte;
That I have doon it is thiself to wite;
Foryive it me, and that I the biseke.'
And yet eftsones I hyt him on the cheke,
And sayde, 'Thef, thus mekil I me wreke.
Now wol I dye, I may no lenger speke.'
But atte last, with mochil care and wo,
We fyl accordid by ourselven tuo;
He yaf me al the bridil in myn hand
To have the governaunce of hous and land,
And of his tonge, and of his hond also,
And made him brenne his book anoon right tho.

And whan I hadde geten unto me
By maistry al the sovereynete,
And that he sayde, 'Myn owne trewe wyf,
Do as the list in term of al thy lyf,
Kepe thyn honour, and kep eek my myn estat;'
And after that day we never hadde debat.
God help me so, I was to him as kynde
As eny wyf fro Denmark unto Inde,
And al-so trewe was he unto me.
I pray to God that sitte in magesté
So blesse his soule, for his mercy deere.
Now wol I say my tale, if ye wol heere."
The Frere lough when he had herd al this:
"Now, dame," quod he, "so have I joye and blis,
This a long preambel of a tale."
And whan the Sompnour herd the Frere gale,
"Lo!" quod this Sompnour, "for Goddes armes tuo,
A frer wol entremet him evermo.
Lo, goode men, a flie and eek a frere
Woln falle in every dissche and matiere.
What spekst thou of perambulacioun?
What? ambil, or trot; or pees, or go sit doun;
Thou lettest oure disport in this matere."
"Ye, woltow so, sir sompnour!" quod the Frere:
"Now, by my fay, I schal, er that I go,
Telle of a sompnour such a tale or tuo,
That alle the folk schuln laughen in this place."
"Now, ellis, frere, I byschrew thy face,"
Quod this Sompnour, "and I byschrewe me,
But-if I telle tales tuo or thre
Of freres, er I come to Sydingborne,
That I schal make thin herte for to morne,
For wel I wot thy paciens is goon."
Oure Hoste cride, "Pees, and that anoon;"
And sayde, "Let the womman telle hir tale.
Ye fare as folkes that dronken ben of ale.
Do, dame, tel forth your tale, and that is best."
"Al redy, sir," quod sche, "right as you lest,
If I have the licence of this worthy frere."
"Yis, dame," quod he, "tel forth, and I schal heere."

In olde dayes of the kyng Arthoúr,
Of which that Britouns speken gret honoúr,
This lond was al fulfilled of fäerie;
The elf-queen, with hir joly companye,
Dauncède ful oft in many a grene mede.
This was the old opynyoun, as I rede;
I speke of many hundrid yer ago;
But now can no man see noon elves mo.
For now the grete charitee and prayeres
Of prechours and of other holy freres,
That sechen every lond and every streem,
As thik as motes in the sonne-beam,
And bless the halles, chambres, kitchenes, boures,
Citees and burghes, castels hihe and toures,
The thorpes, barnes, stables, dayeries,
That makith that ther be no fayeries.
For where was wont to walken many an elf,
Ther walkith non but the prechour by himself,
In evening tymes and in morwenynges,
And saith his matyns and his holy thinges
As he goth prechyng through villáge and toun.
Women may now go safely up and doun,
In every bush, or under every tre,
Ther is no other incubus but he,
And he wil do women no dishonoúr.

And so bifel it, that this king Arthoúr
Had in his hous a lusty bacheler.
That on a day com rydyng fro rivér;
And happèd, al alone as she was born,
He saw a mayde walkyng him byforn,
Of which mayden anon, with foule dede,
By verray fors bireft hir maydenhed.
For which oppressioun was such clamoúr,
And such pursuyte made to kyng Arthoúr,
That damnèd was the knight and shuld be ded
By cours of lawe, and shuld have lost his hed,
(Paráventure such was the statut tho,)
But that the queen and other ladys mo
So longe preyeden thay the kynges grace,
Til he his lif hath graunted in the place,
And gaf him to the queen, al at hir wille
To choose wethir she wolde him save or spille.
The queen thankèd the kyng with al hir might;

And after thus she spak unto the knight,
Whan that she saw hir tyme upon a day:
" Thou stondest yet," quoth she, " in such array,
That of thy lyf hast thou no suretee;
I graunte thy lif, if thou canst telle me,
What thing is it that women most desiren;
Be ware, and keep thy nek-bone fro the iron.
And if thou canst not tellen it anon,
Yet wil I yive thee leve for to goon
A twelfmonth and a day, for to enquere
An answer suffisaunt in this matére.
And suretee wil I have, ere that thou pace,
Thy body for to yielden in this place."
Wo was this knight, and sorwfully he sighèd;
But what? he may not do al as him likèd,
And atte last he chose him for to wende,
And com agein right at the yeres ende
With swich answer as God him wolde purveye;
And takith his leve, and wendith forth his weye.
He sekith every hous and every place
Wher-so he hopith for to fynde grace,
To lerne what thing wommen loven most;
But he ne coude arryven in no coast,
Wher as he mighte fynde in this matére
Two créatúres áccordyng togider.
Some sayden, women loven best richésse,
Some sayde honoúr, and some sayde jolynesse.
Some sayden that oure herte is then most easèd
When that we be y-flaterid and y-pleasèd,
He goth ful nigh the soth, I wil not lye;
A man shal wynne us best with flaterye;
And with attendaunce, and with busynesse
We are y-limèd bothe more and lesse.
Some sayden eke, that we loven best
For to be free, and to do as we lest,
And that no man reprove us of oure vice,
But say that in al thinges we be wyse.
For trewely ther is noon of us alle,
If eny wight wolde stroke us on the galle,
We wil him like and take his word as soth;
Assay, and he shal fynd it, who so doth.
For be we never so vicious withinne,
We shuln be holden wys and clene of synne.

And somme sayn, that gret delit have we
For to be holden stabil and secree,
And in one purpos stedfastly to duelle,
And nought betraye thing that men us telle.
But that tale, pardee, is not worth a pyn.
We wymmen can right no thing hold withinne,
Witnes on Mydas; wil ye here the tale?
Ovyd, among his other thinges smale,
Sayde Mydas had under his longe heres
Growyng upon his hed tuo asses eeres;
The whiche vice he hid, as he best might,
Ful subtilly fro every mannes sight,
That, save his wyf, ther wist of that nomo;
He loved hir most, and trusted hir also;
He prayèd hir, that to no créatúre
She shulde tellen of his dísfigúre.
She swor him, nay, for al this world to wynne,
She wold not do that vilonye or synne
To make hir housbond have so foul a name;
She wolde not tel it for hir owne shame.
But natheles she thoughte to have dyed,
If she so longe sholde a counseil hyde:
Hir thought it swelled so sore about hir hert,
That needely som word must from her stert;
And sins she dorst not tel it unto man,
Doun to a poole faste by she ran,
Til she cam ther, hir herte was on fyre;
And as a bittern boometh in the myre,
She layde hir mouth unto the water doun.
"Betray me not, thou watir, with thy soun,"
Quoth she, "to thee I telle it, and nomo,
Myn housbond hath long asses eeris tuo.
Now is myn hert al hole, now is it oute,
I mighte no lenger kepe it out of doute."
Here may ye see, though we a tyme abyde,
Yet out it must, we can no counseil hyde.
The remenaunt of the tale, if ye wil here,
Rede in Ovid, and ther ye may it leere.
This knight, of which my tale is specially,
When that he saw he mighte nought come therby,
This is to say, what women loven most,
Withinne his brest ful sorwful was the ghost.

But home he goth, he might not long sojourne,
The day was come, that hom-ward most he torne.
And in his way, it hapnyd him to ride
In al his care, under a forest side,
Wher as he saw upon a daunce go
Of ladys four and twenty, and yit mo.
Toward this ilke daunce his feet he set,
In hope that he som wisdom shuld i-get;
But certeynly, ere he com fully there,
Y-vanysshid was this daunce, he knew not where;
No créatúre saw he that bar lif,
But on the greene he saw sittyng a wyf,
A fouler wight ther may no man devyse.
To meet the knight this olde wyf gan ryse,
And sayde, "Sir knight, heer forth there lieth no way;
Tel me then what ye seekyn, by your fay
Paráventure it may the better be:
Thise olde folk have moche power," quoth she,
"My lieve modir," quoth this knight, "certayn
I am but ded but-if that I can sayn
What thing is it that women most desire;
Coude ye me tell, I wolde wel quyt your hyre."
"Plight me thy troth here in myn hond," quoth she,
"The nexte thing that I require thee,
Thou shalt it doo, if it be in thy might,
And I wol telle it thee, ere it be night."
"Have here my trothe," quoth the knight, "I graunte."
"Thenne," quoth she, "I dar me wel avaunte,
Thy lif is sauf, for I wol stonde therby
Upon my lif the queen wil say as I;
Let see, which is the proudest of them alle,
That werith keverchief or cappe or caul,
That dar saye nay to that I shal thee teche.
Let us go forth withouten more speche."
Tho whispered she a word into his eere,
And bad him to be glad, and have no fere.
When they be comen to the court, this knight
Sayd he had holde his day, as he hadde plight,

Al redy was his answer, as he sayde.
Ful many a noble wyf, and many a mayde,
And many a wydow, for that they be wyse,
The queen hirself sittyng as a justise,
Assemblid be, his answer for to here;
And after-ward this knight was bidden appere,
To every wight comaundid was silence,
And that the knight shuld telle in audience
What thing that worldly women loven best.
This knight he stood not stille, as doth a best,
But to the questioún anon answérde,
With manly voys, that al the court it herde;
"My liege lady, generally," quoth he,
"Women desiren to have soverayntee
As wel over their housbond as over their love,
And for to be in maystry him above.
This is the most desir, though ye me kille;
Do as you list, I am heer at your wille."
In al the court ther was not myf, or mayde,
Or wydow, that contráried that he sayde;
But sayden, he was worthy have his lif.
And with that word upstart that olde wif,
Which that the knight saw sittyng on the grene.
"Mercy," quoth she, "my soveraign lady queene,
Ere that your court departe, do me right.
I taughte this same answer to the knight;
For which he plighte me his trothe there,
The firste thing that I wold him requere,
He wold it do, if it lay in his might.
Before this court then pray I thee, sir knight,"
Quoth she, "that thou me take unto thy wif,
For wel thou knowest, that I have kept thy lif;
If I say fals, sey nay, upon thy fey."
This knight answerd, "Allas and weylawey!
I wot right wel that such was my byhest.
For Goddes love, choose then a new request;
Tak al my good, and let my body go."
"Nay," quoth she then, "beshrew us bothe tuo.
For though that I be olde, foule and poure,
I wold not for the metal or the ore
That under erthe is grave, or lith above,
But I thy wife were and eek thy love."

"My love?" quoth he, "nay, my damnacioún.
Allas! that eny of my nacioun
Shuld ever foully disparágid be!"
But al for nought; the ende is this, that he
Constreinèd was, he needes most hir wedde,
And take his wyf, and go with hir to bedde.
Now wolden som men say peráventure,
That for my negligence I do no care
To telle you the joye and the array
That at that fest was made that ilke day.
To which thing shortly answeren I shal,
And say ther was not fest or joy at al,
Ther was but hevynes and moche sorwe;
For privily he weddyd hir on the morrow,
And alday hidde himself as doth an oule,
So wo was him, his wyf lokèd so foule.
Gret was the wo the knight had in his thought
When he was with his wyf on bedde brought,
He walloweth, and he torneth to and fro.
His olde wyf lay smylyng ever mo,
And sayd, "Deere housbond, *benedicite*,
Fareth every knighte with his wyf as ye!
Is this the lawe of king Arthùres hous?
Is every knight of his thus daungerous?
I am your oune love, and eek your wyf,
And I am she that savyd hath your lyf,
And certes never dede I you unright.
Why fare ye thus with me the firste night?
Ye fare lik a man that had lost his wit.
What is my gult? for Godes love, tel me it,
And it shal be amendid, if that I may."
"Amendid!" quoth this knight, "allas! nay, nay,
It wol nought be amendid, never mo;
Thou art so lothly, and so old also,
And therto comen of so low a kynde,
That litil wonder is I walwe and wynde;
So wolde God, myn herte wolde brest!"
"Is this," quoth she, "the cause of your unrest?"
"Ye, certeynly," quoth he, "no wonder is!"
"Now, sir," quoth she, "I coude amende al this,
If that me list, ere it were dayes three,
So that ye wolde bear you wel to me.

But for ye speken of such gentilesse
As is descendid out of old richesse,
Therfor shulde ye be holden gentil men;
Such arrogaunce it is not worth an hen.
Look who that is most vertuous alway,
Open and secret, and most entendith ay
To do the gentil dedes that he can,
Tak him to be the grettest gentil man.
Crist wills we clayme of him oure gentilesse,
Nought of oure eldres for their olde richesse.
For though they give us al their heritage,
For which we clayme to be of high peerage,
Yit may thay not biquethe, for no thing
To noon of us, so vertuous lyvyng,
That made them gentil men y-callid be,
And bad us folwe them in such degree.
Wel knew the wyse poet of Florence,
That highte Daunt, to speke of this sentence;
Lo, in such maner of rym is Dauntes tale;
Ful seldom risith to the braunchis smale
Prowes of man, for God of his prowesse
Wil that we clayme of him our gentilesse;
For of our auncestres we no thing clayme
But temporal thing, that men may hurt and mayme.
Ek every wight knoweth this as wel as I,
If gentiless were plaunted naturelly
Unto a certayn lignage certeynly,
Open or secret, they wolde never try
To do of gentilesce the fair office,
Thay might nought do no vileny or vice.
Take fyr and ber it in the derkest hous
Bitwixe this and the mount Caukasous,
And let men shut the dores, and go thenne,
Yit wol the fyr as fair and lighte brenne
As twenty thousand men might it biholde;
His office naturel ay wil it holde,
On peril on my lif, til that it dye.
Here may ye see wel, how that genterye
Is nought annexid to possessioun,
Since folk do not their operacioun
Alway, as doth the fyr, lo, in his kynde.
For God it wot, men may ful often fynde

A lordes sone do shame and vilonye.
And he that wil have pris of his gentrie,
For he was boren of a gentil hous,
And had his eldres noble and vertuous,
And will himselve do no gentil dedis.
Or follow his gentil auncester, that ded is,
He is nought gentil, be he duk or erl;
For vileyn synful deedes maketh a cherl,
For gentilnesse is but the name to thee
Of thin auncestres, for their high bountee,
Which is a straunge thing to thy persone;
Thy gentilesse cometh fro God allone.
Thence comth oure verray gentilesse of grace,
It was no thing biquethe us with oure place.
Think thou how nobil, as saith Valerius,
Was thilke Tullius Hostilius,
That out of povert rose to high noblesse.
Rede thou Senek, and rede thou eek Boece,
Ther shuln ye see expresse, that no dred is,
That he is gentil that doth gentil dedis.
And therfor, lieve housbond, I conclude,
Al were it that myn auncestres wer rude,
Yit may the highe God, and so hope I,
Graunte me grace to lyve vertuously;
Than am I gentil, wham that I bygynne
To lyve vertuously, and leven synne.
And for that ye of povert me repreve,
The highe God, on whom that we bilieve,
In wilful povert chose to lede his lif;
And certes, every man, mayden, or wyf,
May understonde that Jhesus, heven king,
Wolde not choose a vicious lyvyng.
Glad povert is an honest thing certayn;
This wil Senek and other clerkes sayn.
Who that himself is glad of his povert,
I hold him riche, al had he nought a shert.
He that coveïtith is a pore wight,
For he wold have that is not in his might.
But he that nought hath, and coveyteth nought to have,
Is riche, although ye hold him but a knave
Verray povert it singeth proprely.
Juvenal saith of povert merily,

The pore man when he goth by the way
Bifore the theves he may synge and play.
Povert is sorrowful good, and, as I gesse,
A ful gret brynger out of busynesse;
A gret amender eek of sapiens
To him that takith it in paciens.
Povert is this, although it seme sorrow,
Possessioun no other wight wil borrow.
Povert, ful often, whan a man is lowe,
Makith him his God and eek himself to knowe.
Povert a spectacle is, as thinkith me,
Thurgh which he may his verray frendes see;
And therfor, sir, since that I you nought greve,
Of my povert no more ye me repreve.
" Now, sir, of elde ye repreve me;
And certes, sir, though noon auctoritee
Were in no book, ye gentils of honoúr
Sayn that men shuld an old wight do favour,
And clepe him fader, for your gentilesse;
And auctours I shal fynden, as I gesse.
" Now ther that ye sayn I am foul and old,
Then drede you nought to be a cokewold.
For filthe and elde, so may I thrive, thay be
Grete wardeyns upon faire chastitee.
But natheles, since I knowe your delyt,
I shal fulfille youre worldly appetyt.
Choose, now," quoth she, "one of these thinges tweye,
To have me foul and old til that I deye,
And be to you a trewe and humble wyf,
And never you displease in al my lyf;
Or elles ye wil have me yong and fair,
And take your áventúre of the repair
That shal be to your hous bycause of me,
Or in som other place it may wel be.
Now choose yourselven whethir that you liketh."
This knight avysith him, and sore sighith,
But atte last he sayd in this manére:
" My lady and my love, and wyf so deere,
I putte me in your wyse governaunce,
Choose ye yourself which may be most pleasaúnce
And most honoúr to you and me also,
I care not the whether of the tuo,

For as you likith, it suffisith me."
" Then have I get the mastery," quoth she,
" Since I may govern and choosen as me list? "
" Yea certis, wyf," quoth he, " I hold it best."
" Kys me," quoth she, " we be no longer wrothe,
For, by my trothe, I wil be to you bothe,
That is to saye, yea, bothe fair and true.
I pray to God that I may dyen now,
Unless I be to you as good and trewe
As ever was wyf, since the world was newe;
And but I be to morrow as fair to seen
As eny lady, emperesse, or queen,
That is bitwix the east and eek the west,
Do by my lyf right even as you lest.
Cast up the curtains, and look what this is."
And whan the knyght saw verrayly al this,
That she so fair was, and so yong therto,
For joye he caught hir in his armes tuo;
His herte bathid in a bath of blisse,
A thousand tyme on rowe he gan hir kisse.
And she obeyèd him in every thing
That mighte do him pleisauns or likyng.
And thus thay lyve unto their lyves end
In parfyt joye; and Jhesu Crist us sende
Housbondes meke, yonge, and fresshe on bedde,
And grace to overcome them that we wedde.
And eek I pray to Jhesus shorten their lyves,
That wil nought be govérnèd after their wyves.
And old and angry nygardes of despense,
God send them sone verray pestilence!

THE FRERES TALE

This worthy preacher, I mene this noble Frere,
He made always a maner of angry cheere
Upon the Somnour, but for honestee
No vileyn worde yit to him spak he.
But atte last he sayd unto the wyf,
" Dame," quoth he, " God yive you al good lyf!
Ye have here touchid, so God prosper me,

Upon a mater of gret difficulté.
Ye have sayd moche thing right wel, I say;
But, dame, right as we ryden by the way,
We neede nought but for to speke of game,
And leeve auctorités, in Goddes name,
To preching and to scoles of clergie.
But if it like to this good companye,
I wil you of a somnour telle a game;
In faith, ye may wel knowe by the name,
That of a somnour may no good be sayd;
I pray that noon be wroth with that is seyd;
A somnour is a runner up and doun
Wyth licenses for fornicacioun,
And is y-bete at every tounes ende."
Our hoste spak, "A! sir, ye sholde amende
Your wordes, as a man of your estate,
In company we wil have no debat;
Tell on your tale, and let the Somnour be."
"Nay," quoth the Somnour, "let him say to me
What so him list; whan it cometh to my lot,
By God! I shal him quyten every grote.
I shal him tellen, what a gret honoúr
It is to be a false flatteryng frere.
And his offis I shal him telle i-wis."
Our host answerde, "Pees, no more of this."
And after this he sayd unto the Frere,
"Tell forth your tale, my leve maister deere."

Whilom there was dwellyng in my countree
An archedeken, a man of gret degree,
That boldely did execucioún,
In punyshyng of fornicacioún,
Of witchecraft, and eek of bauderye,
Of diffamacioun, and adultery,
Of chirche-plunder, and of testamentes,
Of contractes, and of lak of sacraments,
And eek of many another maner cryme,
Which need not be rehersèd at this tyme;
Of usury, and of symony also;
But most to lecchours did he grettest wo;
Thay shulde syng, to be discoverèd;
And smale tythers thay were punisshèd,
If eny persoun wold on them compleyne,

Ther might astert him no pecunial peyne.
For smale tythes and for smal offrynge,
He made the peple piteously to synge.
For ere the bisshop caught them in his hook,
They weren in the archedeknes book:
And he hadde thurgh his jurediccioún
Power to do to them correccioún.
He had a somnour redy to his hand,
A slyer boy was noon in Engeland;
Ful prively he had his spyes aboute,
That taughte him wher he might get many a grote.
He coude spare the wicked one or tuo,
To fine and punish four and twenty mo.
For though this somnour fierce were as an hare,
To telle his wickednesse I wil not spare;
For we be out of there correccioún,
They have of us no jurediccioún,
And never shal until thay al be gon.
" Peter! so be the wommen of the toun,"
Quod this Somnour, " i-put out of oure care."
" Pees! mischief on thee, wolt thou not him spare? "
Thus sayd our host, " to tellen forth his tale.
Hold not thy tong, although the Somnour rail,
Spare not a word, myn owne maister deere."
This false theef, the somnour, quoth the frere,
Had alway bawdes redy to his hond,
As eny hauk to lure in Engelond,
That told him al the secrets up and doun,
For there acqueintaunce was in al the toun;
Thay were his own informers prively.
He took himself a gret profyt therby;
His maister knew nat alway what he won.
Withoute permission, a poore man
He coude summon, on peyne of Cristes curs,
And thay were glad to fille wel his purs,
And make him grete festis at the ale.
And right as Judas he hadde a purse smale
And was a theef, right such a theef was he,
His maister had not half his duetee;
He was (if I shal given him his due)
A theef, a somnour, and eek a shrew.

And he had wenches at his retenue,
That whethir that sir Robert or sir Hughe,
Or Jak, or Rauf, or who-so that it were,
That lay by them, thay told it in his eere.
Thus were the wenche and he of one assent.
And he wold fecche a feyned commaundement,
And somne them to chapitre bothe tuo,
And fine the man, and let the wenche go.
Than wold he say, "I shal, frend, for thy sake,
Do strike thy name out of oure lettres blake;
Thou shalt no more as in this cas traváyle;
I am thy frend where I thee may avayle."
And certeynly he knew of bribours mo
Than possible is to telle in yeres tuo;
For in this world no dogge for the bowe,
That can an hurt deer from an whole knowe,
Better than this somnour knew a leccheour,
Or adulterer, or else a paramour;
And for that was the fruyt of al his rent,
Therfore, theron he set al his entent.
And so bifel, that once upon a day
This somnour, ever watchyng for his prey,
Rode forth to somne a widew, lean and olde,
Feynyng a cause, for he wolde winne golde.
And happede that he saw bifore him ryde
A gay yeoman under a forest syde;
A bow he bar, and arrows bright and kene,
He had upon a short cote al of grene,
An hat upon his hed, with fringes blake.
"Sir," quod this somnour, "heyl and wel overtake!"
"Welcome," quoth he, "and every felawe good;
Whider ridest thou under this grene wood?"
Sayde this yeoman, "Wilt thou go far to day?"
This somnour answered him, and sayde, "Nay
Her faste by," quoth he, "is myn entent
To ryden, for to reysen up a rent
That longith to my lordes duetee."
"Art thou a bailif then?" "I am," quoth he.
He durste not for verray filth and shame
Say that he was a somnour, for the name.
"*De par dieux!*" quod the yeoman, "lieve brother,

Thou art a bailif and I am another.
I am unknowen, as in this contree;
Of thin acqueintance I wil praye the,
And eek of brotherhood, if it you list.
I have gold and silver in my chest;
If that thee happe to come into oure shire,
Al shal be thin, right as thou wolt desire."
"*Graunt mercy*," quoth this sommour, "by my faith!"
Each in the others hand his trothe laith,
For to be sworne bretheren til thay dey.
In daliaúnce forth thay ride and pley.
This somnour, which was as ful of questioún,
As ful of venym is the adder broun,
And ever enquéring upon every thing,
"Brother," quoth he, "wher now is your dwellyng,
Another day if that I shuld you seeche?"
This yeoman him answered in softe speche:
"Brother," quoth he, "fer in the north contré
Wheras I hope somtyme I shal thee see
Ere we depart I shal the so wel say,
That to myn hous thou shalt not misse the wey."
"Now, brother," quoth this somnour, "I you pray,
Teche me, whil that we ryden by the way,
Since that ye be a baily as am I,
Som subtiltee, and tel me faithfully
In myn office how I may golde wynne.
And spare not for consciens or for synne,
But, as my brother, tel me how do ye."
"Now, by my trothe, brothir myn," sayd he,
"As I shal telle thee a faithful tale.
My wages be ful streyt and eek ful smale;
My lord to me is hard and dangerous,
And myn office is ful laborious;
And therfor by extorcioúns I lyve,
Forsoth I take al that men wil me give,
Either by sleight or else by violence
Fro yer to yer I wynne my expense;
I can no better telle faithfully."
"Now certes," quoth this somnour, "so fare I;
I spare not to take, God it wot,

Unlesse it be too hevy or too hot.
What I may get in counseil privily,
No more consciens of that have I.
Withoute extorcións, I might not lyven,
And of such japes I wil not be shriven.
Stomak or conscience know I never noon;
I curse thes shrifte-fadres every one.
Wel be we met, by God and by seint Jame!
But, leve brother, telle me thy name,"
Quoth this somnour. And in this mene-while
This yeoman gan a litel for to smyle.
"Brothir," quoth he, "wolt thou that I thee telle?
I am a feend, my dwellyng is in helle,
And here I ryde about my wandering,
To wite if men wol give me eny thing.
My gathering on erthe is al my rent.
Loke how thou ridest for the same entent
To wynne good, thou rekkist never how,
Right so fare I, for ryde I wolde now
Unto the worldes ende for a prey."
"A!" quoth the somnour, "*bencite*, what ye say?
I thought ye were a yeoman trewely.
Ye have a mannes shape as wel as I,
Have ye a figure then determinate
In helle, when ye be in your estate?"
"Nay, certeynly," quoth he, "ther have we non,
But whan we plesen we can take one on,
Or else we make it seme that we be shape
Som tyme like a man, or like an ape;
Or lik an aungel can I ryde or go;
It is no wonder thing though it be so
A lousy juggelour can decyve thee,
And, parfay, yit know I more craft than he."
"Why," quoth this somnour, "ryde ye then or gon
In sondry wyse, and nought alway in one?"
"For," quoth he, "we wil us in such forme make,
As moste fit oure pray is for to take."
"What makith you to have al this laboúr?"
"Ful many a cause, lieve sir somnour,"

Sayde this feend. " But al thing hath a tyme;
The day is short, and it is passèd prime,
And yit have I won nothing in this day;
I wol wynne somwhat now and if I may,
And not entende oure thinges to declare;
For, brother myn, thy wit is al too bare
To understond, although I told them thee.
Yet, as thou axid whi laboúre we;
Som tyme we be Goddis instrumentes
And menes to don al his comaundementes,
Whan that he list, upon his créatúres,
In divers acts and in divérs figúres.
Withouten him we have no might certéyn,
If that he pleseth to sende us back agayn.
And som tyme at our prayer have we leeve,
Only the body, and not the soule to greve;
Witnes on Job, to whom we dide ful wo.
And som tyme have we might on bothe tuo,
This is to say on body and soule eeke.
And som tyme be we suffred for to wreak
Upon a man, and do his soule unrest
And not his body, and al is for the best.
When he withstondith oure temptacioún,
It is a cause of his salvacioún,
Al be it so it was nought oure thought
He safe is though we fayn wold have him caughte.
And som tyme we be servaunt unto man,
As to the erchebisshop seynt Dunstán,
And to the apostolis, servaunt eek was I."
" Yit tel me," quoth the somnour, " faithfully,
Make ye newe bodies for you alway
Of elements? " The fend him answerde, " Nay;
Som tyme we feyne, and som tyme we aryse
With dede bodies, in ful wonder wyse,
And speke resonably, and as fair and wel
As to the Pythonesse dede Samuel;
And yit wol somme say, it was not he.
I know but lytel of your divinitee.
But one thing warne I thee, I wol not jape,
Thou woldest fully know how we be shape:
Thou shalt herafter-ward, my brother deere,
Com, wher thee nedith nothing to enqueere,
For thou shalt by thin own experience

Here from a thron*e* read al thy sentence
Better than Virgile, whils he was on erthe,
Or Dante also. Now let us ryd*e* forthe,
For I wil hold*e* company with thee,
Til it be so that thou forsak*e* me."
"Nay," quoth the somnour, "that shal nought betyde.
I am a yeoman that knowen is ful wyde;
My troth*e* wil I holde, as in this case.
For though thou be the devyl Sathanas,
My troth*e* wil I holde to thee, my brother,
As I am swore, and ech of us to other,
For to be trew*e* bretheren in intent;
For bothe we go aboute to get oure rent.
Tak thou thi part, and that men wil the gyven,
And I shal myn, thus may we both*e* lyven.
And if ech one of us have more than other,
Let him be trewe, and part it with his brother."
"I graunt*e*," quod the devel, "by my fay!"
And with that word thay riden forth there way;
And right at the entryng of a town*es* ende,
To which this somnour shaped him for to wende,
Thay saw a cart, that chargid was with hay,
Which that a carter drof forth in his way.
Deep was the way, for which the cart*e* stood;
This carter smote, and cryde as he wer wood,
"Hayt, brok; hayt, scot; why care ye for the stones?
The fend," quoth he, "you fetch body and bones,
As true as ever in stable ye were foled!
So moch*e* wo I have with you y-tholed!
The devyl have al, both cart and hors and hay!"
This somnour sayd*e*, "Her shal we see som play."
And nere the feend he drough, in secret wyse,
Ful privily, and soft*e* did him avyse,
"Herk*e*, my brother, herk*e*, by thi faith!
Herest thou not that which the carter saith?
Take it anon, for he hath given it the,
Bothe hay and hors, and eek his cart, pardé!"
"Nay," quoth the devyl, "God wot, never a whit,
It is nought his entent*e*, trust me yit,

Ask it thiself, if thou not trowist me,
Or elsę stint a while and thou shalt see."
This carter smiteth his hors upon the croupe,
And thay bygonne to drawen and to stowpe.
"Hayt now," quoth he, "where Jhesu Crist you blesse,
And al his hondwerk, bothe more and lesse!
That was wel pulled, myn oune brave boy,
I pray God save thy body and seint Loy!
Now is my cart out of the sloo parfay!"
"Lo! brother," quoth the feend, "what told I thee?
Her may ye see, myn owne deere brother,
The carter spak one thing, and thought another.
Let us go forth abouten our viáge;
Hier wynne I nothing from this cariáge."
Whan that thay comen somwhat on the way,
This somnour to his brothir gan to say;
"Brothir," quoth he, "her dwelleth an old wife,
That had almost as lief to lose hir lif,
As for to give a peny of hir good.
I wil have twelf pens though that she go wood,
Or I wil summon hir to oure office;
And yit, God wot, I know of hir no vice.
But for thou canst not, as in this countree,
Wynne thy rent, tak here ensample from me."
This somnour clappèd at the widowes gate;
"Com out," quothe he, "thou olde reprobate;
I trowe thou hast som frere or priest with thee."
"Who clappith?" sayd this widow, "bencité,
God save you, sir! what is your swete wille?"
"I have," quoth he, "a summons in a bille,
On payne of cursyng, loke that thou be
To morwe biforn our archedeknes knee,
To answer to the court of certeyn thinges."
"Nou," quoth she, "Jesu Crist, and king of kinges,
So wisly helpe me, as I not may.
I have ben seek, and that ful many a day.
I may not go so fer;" quoth she, "nor ryde,
But I be deed, so prikith me my syde.
May I nat aske excuse, sir somnour,
And answer ther by my procúratoúr

To suche thing as men wol charge to me?"
"Yis," quoth this somnour, "pay anon, let see,
Twelf pens to me, and I thee wil acquite.
I shal no profyt have therby or lite;
My mayster hath the profyt and not I.
Com out, and let me ryden hastily;
Gif me my twelf pens, I may no lenger tary."
"Twelf pens?" quoth she, "now lady seinte Mary
So wisly help me out of care and synne,
This wyde worlde though that I shulde wynne,
Lo, have I not twelf pens withinne myn hold.
Ye knowen wel that I am pore and old;
Give of youre almes to me a pore wretche."
"Nay then," quoth he, "the foule fend me fetche!
If I thee excuse, though thou shalt be spilt."
"Allas!" quoth she, "God wot, I have no gilt."
"Pay me," quoth he, "or by the swete seint Anne
As I wol bere away thy newe panne
For dette, which thou owest me of old,
Whan that thou madest thin housbond cuckold,
I payd at hom for thy correccioún."
"Thou liest," quoth she, "by my salvacioun,
Nor was I never ere now, wydow ne wyf,
Summond unto your court in al my lyf;
Nor never I was of my body untrewe.
Unto the devel rough and blak of hiewe
Give I thy body and the panne also!"
And when the devyl herd hir curse so
Upon hir knees, he sayd in this manére:
"Now, Mabely, myn owne modir deere,
Is this your wil in ernest that ye seye?"
"The devel," quoth she, "fetche him ere he deye,
And panne and al, unless he wol repente!"
"Nay, olde dame, that is not myn entente,"
Quoth this somnour, "for to repente me
For eny thing that I have had of thee;
I wold I had thy smok and every cloth."
"Now brothir," quoth the devyl, "be not wroth;

Thy body and this panne is myn by right.
Thou shalt with me to helle yit to night,
Wher thou shalt knowen of our privitee
More than a maister of divinitee."
And with that word the foule fend him hente;
Body and soule, he with the devyl wente,
Wher al the somnours have their heritage;
And God that makèd after his ymáge
Mankynde, save and gyde us alle and some,
And teche this somnour good man to bycome.
"Lordyngs, I coud have told you," quoth the frere,
"Had I had leysir for this somnour here,
After the text of Crist, and Powel, and Jon,
And of oure other doctours many a one,
Such peynes that our herte might affrighte,
Al be it so, no tonge may tell aright,
Though that I might a thousand wynter telle,
The peyn of that same cursèd hous of helle.
But for to kepe us from that cursèd place,
Watch we and pray to Jesu for his grace,
So kepe us fro the temptour Sathanas.
Herken this word, be war as in this case.
The lyoun sitteth watching al the day
To slay the innocent, if that he may.
Dispose then youre hertes to withstonde
The feend, that wolde make you thral and bonde;
He may not tempte yow beyond your might,
For Crist wil be your champioun and knight;
And praye, that oure Somnour him repente
Of his mysdede, ere that the feend him hente."

THE SOMPNOURES TALE

This Sompnour in his styrop up he stood,
Upon the Frere his herte was so wood,
That lyk an aspen leef he quok for ire.
"Lordyngs," quod he, "but oon thing I desire;
I yow biseke, that of your curtesye,
Syn ye han herd this false Frere lye,

As suffrith me I may my tale telle.
This Frere bosteth that he knowith helle,
And, God it wot, that is litil wonder,
Freres and feendes been but litel asonder.
For, pardy, ye han often tyme herd telle,
How that a frere ravyscht was to helle
In spirit ones by a visioun,
And as an aungel lad him up and doun,
To schewen him the peynes that ther were,
In al the place saugh he not a frere,
Of other folk he saugh y-nowe in wo.
Unto this aungel spak this frere tho:
'Now, sire,' quod he, 'han freres such a grace,
That noon of hem schal comen in this place?'
'Yis,' quod this aungil, "many a mylioun.'
And unto Sathanas he lad him doun.
'And now hath Sathanas,' saith he, 'a tayl
Broder than of a carrik is the sayl.'
'Hold up thy tayl, thou Sathanas,' quod he,
'Schew forth thyn ars, and let the frere se
Wher is the nest of freres in this place.'
And er than half a forlong way of space,
Right so as bees swarmen out of an hyve,
Out of the develes ers thay gonne dryve,
Twenty thousand freres on a route,
And thorughout helle swarmed al aboute,
And comen ayeine, as fast as thay maye goon,
And in his ers thay crepen everichoon.
He clappid his tayle agayn, and lay ful stille.
This frere, whan he loked had his fille
Upon the torment of this sory place,
His spirit God restored of his grace
Unto his body agayn, and he awook;
But natheles for fere yit he quook,
So was the develes ers yit in his mynde,
That is his heritage of verray kynde.
God save yow alle, save this cursed Frere;
My proloug wol I ende in this manere."

Lordyngs, ther is in Engelond, I gesse,
A mersschly lond called Holdernesse,
In which ther went a lymytour aboute
To preche, and eek to begge, it is no doubte.

And so bifel it on a day this frere
Hadde preched at a chirch in his manere,
And specially aboven every thing
Excited he the poepul in his preching
To trentals, and to yive for Goddis sake,
Wherwith men mighten holy houses make,
Ther as divine servys is honoured,
Nought ther as it is wasted and devoured;
Neither it needeth not for to be yive,
As to possessioneres, that mow lyve,
Thanked be God, in wele and abundaunce.
"Trentals," sayd he, "delyvereth fro penaunce
Her frendes soules, as wel eld as yonge.
Ye, whanne that thay hastily ben songe,
Nought for to hold a prest jolif and gay,
He syngith not but oon masse in a day.
Delyverith out anon," quod he, "the soules.
Ful hard it is, with fleischhok or with oules
To ben y-clawed, or brend, or i-bake;
Now speed yow hastily for Cristes sake."
And whan this frere hadde sayd al his entente,
With *qui cum patre*, forth his way he wente.
Whan folk in chirch had yive him what hem leste,
He went his way, no lenger wold he reste,
With scrip and pyked staf, y-touked hye;
In every hous he gan to pore and prye,
And beggyde mele or chese, or ellis corn.
His felaw had a staf typped with horn,
A payr of tablis al of yvory,
And a poyntel y-polischt fetisly,
And wroot the names alway as he stood
Of alle folk that yaf him eny good,
Ascaunce that he wolde for hem preye.
"Yif us a busshel whet, or malt, or reye,
A Goddes kichil, or a trip of chese,
Or elles what yow list, we may not chese;
A Goddes halpeny, or a masse peny;
Or yif us of youre braune, if ye have eny,
A dagoun of your blanket, leeve dame,
Oure suster deer,—lo! her I write your name—
Bacoun or beef, or such thing as we fynde."
A stourdy harlot ay went hem byhynde,

That was her hostis man, and bar a sak,
And what men yaf hem, layd it on his bak.
And whan that he was out atte dore, anoon
He planed out the names everychoon,
That he biforn hadde writen in his tablis;
He served hem with nyfles and with fablis.
"Nay, ther thou lixt, thou Sompnour," sayde the Frere.
"Pees," quod our host, "for Cristes moder deere,
Tel forth thy tale, and spare it not at al."
"So thrive I," quod the Sompnour, "so I schal!"
So long he wente hous by hous, til he
Cam til an hous, ther he was wont to be
Refresshid mor than in an hundrid placis.
Syk lay the housbond man, whos that the place is,
Bedred upon a couche lowe he lay.
"*Deus hic*," quod he, "O Thomas, frend, good day!"
Sayde this frere al curteysly and softe.
"O Thomas, God yeld it yow, ful ofte
Have I upon this bench i-fare ful wel,
Her have I eten many a mery mel."
And fro the bench he drof away the cat,
And layd adoun his potent and his hat,
And eek his scrip, and set him soft adoun;
His felaw was go walkid in the toun
Forth with his knave, into the ostelrye,
Wher as he schop him thilke night to lye.
"O deere maister," quod the seeke man,
"How have ye fare siththe March bygan?
I saygh yow nought this fourtenight or more."
"God wot," quod he, "labord have I ful sore;
And specially for thy salvacioun
Have I sayd many a precious orisoun,
And for myn other frendes, God hem blesse.
I have to day ben at your chiche at messe,
And sayd a sermoun after my simple wit,
Nought al after the text of holy wryt.
For it is hard for yow, as I suppose,
And therfor wil I teche yow ay the glose.
Glosyng is a ful glorious thing certayn,
For letter sleth, so as we clerkes sayn.

Ther have I taught hem to be chariteable,
And spend her good ther it is reasonable;
And there I seigh our dame, wher is she?"
"Yond in the yerd I trowe that sche be,"
Sayde this man, "and sche wil come anoon."
"Ey, mayster, welcome be ye, by seint Johan!"
Sayde this wyf, "how fare ye hertily?"
The frere ariseth up ful curteysly,
And her embracith in his armes narwe,
And kist her swete, and chirkith as a sparwe
With his lippes: "Dame," quod he, "right wel.
As he that is your servaunt everydel.
Thankyd be God, that yow yaf soule and lif,
Yit saugh I not this day so fair a wyf
In al the chirche, God so save me."
"Ye, God amend defautes, sir," quod sche,
"Algates welcome be ye, by my fay."
"Graunt mercy, dame; this have I found alway.
But of your grete goodnes, by youre leve,
I wolde pray yow that ye yow not greeve,
I wil with Thomas speke a litel throwe;
These curates ben ful negligent and slowe
To grope tendurly a conscience.
In schrift and preching is my diligence,
And study in Petres wordes and in Poules,
I walk and fissche Cristen menne soules,
To yelde Jhesu Crist his propre rent;
To spreden his word is al myn entent."
"Now, by your leve, a deere sir," quod sche,
"Chyd him right wel for seinte Trinite.
He is as angry as a pissemyre,
Though that he have al that he can desire,
Though I him wrye on night, and make him warm,
And over him lay my leg other myn arm,
He groneth lik our boor, that lith in sty.
Othir disport of him right noon have I,
I may please him in no maner caas."
"O Thomas, *je vous dy*, Thomas, Thomas,
This makth the feend, this moste ben amendid.
Ire is a thing that highe God defendid,
And therof wold I speke a word or two."

"Now, maister," quod the wyf, "er that I go,
What wil ye dine? I will go theraboute."
"Now, dame," quod he, "*je vous dy saunz doute*,
Have I not of a capoun but the lyvere,
And of your softe brede but a schivere,
And after that a rostyd pigges heed,
(But that I wolde for me no best were deed)
Than had I with yow homly suffisaunce.
I am a man of litel sustinaunce.
My spirit hath his fostryng on the Bible.
The body is ay so redy and so penyble
To wake, that my stomak is destroyed.
I pray yow, dame, that ye be not anoyed,
For I so frendly yow my counseil schewe;
By God! I nolde not telle it but a fewe."
"Now, sir," quod sche, "but o word er I go.
My child is deed withinne thise wykes two,
Soon after that ye went out of this toun."
"His deth saugh I by revelacioun,"
Sayde this frere, "at hoom in oure dortour.
I dar wel sayn, er that half an hour
After his deth, I seigh him born to blisse
In myn ayvsioun, so God me wisse.
So did our sextein, and our fermerere,
That had ben trewe freres many a yere;
Thay may now, God be thanked of his lone,
Maken her jubilé, and walk alloone.
But up I roos, and al our covent eeke,
With many a teere trilling on my cheeke,
Te Deum was our song, and nothing ellis,
Withouten noys or clateryng of bellis,
Save that to Crist I sayd an orisoun,
Thankyng him of my revelacioun.
For, sire and dame, trustith me right wel,
Our orisouns ben more effectuel,
And more we se of Goddis secré thinges,
Than borel folk, although that thay ben kinges.
We lyve in povert and in abstinence,
And borel folk in riches and dispence
Of mete and drink, and in her ful delyt.
We han this worldes lust al in despyt.
Lazer and Dives lyveden diversely.

And divers guerdoun hadde thay thereby.
Who-so wol praye, he muste faste, and be clene,
And fatte his soule, and make his body lene.
We faren, as saith thapostil; cloth and foode
Sufficeth us, though that thay ben not goode.
The clennes and the fastyng of us freres
Makith that Crist acceptith oure prayeres.
Lo, Moyses fourty dayes and fourty night
Fasted, er that the highe God of might
Spak with him in the mount of Synay;
With empty wombe fastyng many a day,
Receyved he the lawe, that was writen
With Goddis fynger; and Eli, wel ye witen,
In mount Oreb, or he had any speche
With highe God, that is oure lyves leche,
He fastid, and was in contemplacioun.
Aron, that hadde the temple in governacioun,
And eek the other prestes everychoon,
Into the temple whan thay schulden goon
To preye for the people, and doon servise,
Thay nolden drinken in no maner wise
No drynke, which that dronke might hem make,
But ther in abstinence prey and wake,
Lest that they diden; tak heed what I saye—
But thay ben sobre that for the pepul praye—
War that I say—no mor; for it suffisith.
Oure Lord Jhesu, as oure lore devysith,
Yaf us ensampil of fastyng and prayeres;
Therfore we mendivantz, we sely freres,
Ben wedded to povert and to continence,
To charité, humblesse, and abstinence,
To persecucioun for rightwisnesse,
To wepyng, misericord, and clennesse.
And therfor may ye seen that oure prayeres
(I speke of us, we mendeaunts, we freres)
Ben to the hihe God more acceptable
Than youres, with your festis at your table.
Fro Paradis first, if I schal not lye,
Was man out chaced for his glotonye,
And chast was man in Paradis certeyn.
But now herk, Thomas, what I schal the seyn,
I ne have no tixt of it, as I suppose,
But I schal fynd it in a maner glose;

That specially our swete Lord Jhesus
Spak this by freres, whan he sayde thus,
Blessed be thay that pover in spirit ben.
And so forth in the gospel ye maye seen,
Whether it be likir oure professioun,
Or heris that swymmen in possessioun.
Fy on her pomp, and on her glotenye,
And on her lewydnesse! I hem defye.
Me thinkith thay ben lik Jovynian,
Fat as a whal, and walken as a swan;
Al vinolent as botel in the spence.
Her prayer is of ful gret reverence;
Whan thay for soules sayn the Psalm of David,
Lo, boef thay say, *Cor meum eructavit.*
Who folwith Cristes gospel and his lore
But we, that humble ben, and chast, and pore,
Workers of Goddes word, not auditours?
Therfor right as an hauk upon a sours
Upspringeth into thaer, right so prayeres
Of charitabil and chaste busy freres
Maken our sours to Goddis eeres tuo.
Thomas, Thomas, so mote I ryde or go,
And by that Lord that clepid is seint Ive,
Ner thou oure brother, schuldestow never thrive.
In oure chapitre pray we day and night
To Crist, that he the sende hele and might
Thy body for to welden hastily."
" God wot," quod he, " thereof nought feele I,
As help me Crist, as I in fewe yeeres
Have spendid upon many diveris freres
Ful many a pound, yet fare I never the bet;
Certeyn my good have I almost byset.
Farewel my gold, for it is almost ago."
The frere answerd, " O Thomas, dostow so?
What needith yow dyverse freres seche?
What needith him that hath a parfyt leche
To sechen othir leches in the toun?
Youre inconstance is youre confusioun.
Helde ye than me, or elles oure covent,
To praye for yow insufficient?
Thomas, that jape is not worth a myte;
Youre malady is for we have to lite

A! yive that covent half a quarter otes;
A! yive that covent four and twenty grotes;
A! yive that frere a peny, and let him go;
Nay, nay, Thomas, it may nought be so.
What is a ferthing worth depart in tuelve?
Lo, ech thing that is ooned in himselve
Is more strong than whan it is to-skatrid.
Thomas, of me thou schalt not ben y-flatrid,
Thow woldist have our labour al for nought.
The hihe God, that al this world hath wrought
Saith, that a werkman is worthy his hyre.
Thomas, nought of your tresor I desire
As for myself, but for that oure covent
To praye for yow is ay so diligent;
And for to buylden Cristes holy chirche.
Thomas, if ye wil lerne for to wirche,
Of buyldying up of chirches may ye fynde
If it be good, in Thomas lyf of Ynde.
Ye lye her ful of anger and of ire,
With which the devel set your hert on fuyre,
And chyden her the holy innocent
Your wyf, that is so meke and pacient.
And therfor trow me, Thomas, if thou list,
Ne stryve nought with thy wyf, as for thi best
And ber this word away now by thy faith,
Touchinge such thing, lo, the wise man saith,
Withinne thin hous be thou no lyoun;
To thy subjects do noon oppressioun;
Ne make thyn acqueyntis fro the fle.
And yit, Thomas, eftsons I charge the,
Be war for ire that in thy bosom slepith,
War for the serpent, that so slely crepith
Under the gras, and styngith prively;
Be war, my sone, and werk paciently,
For twenty thousend men han lost her lyves
For stryvyng with her lemmans and her wyves.
Now syns ye han so holy and meeke a wif,
What nedith yow, Thomas, to make strif?
Ther nys, i-wis, no serpent so cruel,
When men trede on his tail, ne half so fel,
As womman is, when sche hath caught an ire:
Vengeans is thanne al that thay desire.
Schortly may no man, by rym and vers,

Tellen her thoughtes, thay ben so dyvers.
Ire is a sinne, oon the grete of sevene,
Abhominable to the God of hevene,
And to himself it is destruccioun.
This every lewed vicory or parsoun
Can say, how ire engendrith homicide;
Ire is in soth executour of pride.
I couthe of ire seyn so moche sorwe,
My tale schulde laste til to morwe.
Ire is the grate of synne, as saith the wise,
To fle therfro ech man schuld him devyse.
And therfor pray I God bothe day and night,
An irous man God send him litil might.
It is greet harm, and also great pité,
To set an irous man in high degré.
" Whilom ther was an irous potestate,
As seith Senek, that duryng his estaat
Upon a day out riden knightes tuo;
And, as fortune wolde right as it were so,
That oon of hem cam home, that other nought.
Anoon the knight bifore the juge is brought,
That sayde thus, Thou hast thy felaw slayn,
For which I deme the to deth certayn
And to anothir knight comaundid he,
Go, lede him to the deth, I charge the.
And happed, as thay wente by the weye
Toward the place ther he schulde deye,
The knight com, which men wend hadde be deed.
Than thoughten thay it were the beste reed
To lede hem bothe to the juge agayn.
Thay sayden, Lord, the knight hath not slayn
His felaw; lo, heer he stont hool on lyve.
Ye schal be deed, quod he, so mote I thrive!
That is to sayn, bothe oon, tuo, and thre.
And to the firste knyght right thus spak he;
I deme the, thou most algate be deed.
Than thoughte thay it were the beste rede,
To lede him forth into a fair mede.
And, quod the juge, also thou most lese thin heed,
For thou art cause why thy felaw deyth.
And to the thridde felaw thus he seith;
Thou hast nought doon that I comaundid the.

And thus let don sle hem alle thre.
Irous Cambises was eek dronkelewe,
And ay delited him to ben a schrewe;
And so bifel, a lord of his meigné,
That loved vertues, and eek moralité,
Sayd on a day bitwix hem tuo right thus,
A lord is lost, if he be vicious;
An irous man is lik a frentik best,
In which ther is of wisdom noon arrest;
And dronkenes is eek a foul record
Of any man, and namly of a lord.
Ther is ful many an eyghe and many an eere
Awaytand on a lord, and he not where.
For Goddes love, drynk more attemperelly:
Wyn makith man to lese wrecchedly
His mynde, and eek his lymes everichoon.
The revers schaltow seen quod he, anoon,
And prove it by thin owne experience,
That wyn ne doth to folk non such offence.
Ther is no won byreveth me my wight
Of hond, of foot, ne of myn eyghe sight.
And for despyt he dronke moche more
An hundrid part than he hadde doon byfore;
And right anoon, this irous cursid wrecche
Let this knightes sone anoon biforn him fecche,
Comaundyng hem thay schulde biforn him stonde;
And sodeinly he took his bowe on honde,
And up the streng he pullede to his eere,
And with an arwe he slough the child right there.
Now whethir have I a sikur hond or noon?
Quod he, Is al my mynde and might agoon?
Hath wyn byrevyd me myn eye sight?
What schuld I telle the answer of the knight?
His sone was slayn, ther is no more to saye.
Be war therfor with lordes how ye playe,
Syngith Placebo, and I schal if I can.
But-if it be unto a pore man;
To a pore man men schuld his vices telle,
But not to a lord, they he schulde go to helle.
Lo, irous Cirus thilke Percien,
How he destruyede the ryver of Gysen,
For that an hors of his was dreynt therinne,

Whan that he wente Babiloyne to wynne:
He made that the ryver was so smal,
That wommen mighte wade it overal.
Lo, what sayde he, that so wel teche can?
Ne be no felaw to an irous man,
Ne with no wood man walke by the waye,
Lest the repent. I wel no lenger saye.
Now, Thomas, leve brother, leve thin ire,
Thow schalt me fynde as just as is a squire;
Thyn anger doth the al to sore smerte,
Hald not the develes knyf ay at thyn herte,
But schewe to me al thy confessioun."
"Nay," quod this syke man, "by seynt Symoun,
I have ben schriven this day of my curate:
I have him told holly al myn estate.
Nedith no more to speken of it, saith he,
But if me list of myn humilité."
"Yif me than of thy good to make our cloyster,"
Quod he, "for many a muscle and many an oyster
Hath ben oure foode, our cloyster to arreyse.
Whan other men han ben ful wel at eyse;
And yit, God wot, unnethe the foundement
Parformed is, ne of oure pavyment
Is nought a tyle yit withinne our wones;
By God, we owe yit fourty pound for stones.
Now help, Thomas, for him that harewed helle,
Or elles moote we oure bookes selle;
And yif yow lakke oure predicacioun,
Thanne goth the world al to destruccioun.
For who-so wold us fro the world byreve,
So God me save, Thomas, by youre leve,
He wolde byreve out of this world the sonne.
For who can teche and werken as we conne?
And this is not of litel tyme," quod he,
"But sithithen Elye was her, or Elisee,
Han freres ben, fynde I of record,
In charite, i-thanked be oure Lord.
Now, Thomas, help for seynte Charité."
Adoun he sette him anoon on his kne.
This sike man wex wel neigh wood for ire,

He wolde that the frere had ben on fuyre
With his fals dissimulacioun.
"Such thing as is in my possessioun,"
Quod he, "that may I yeve yow and noon other;
Ye sayn me thus, how that I am your brother."
"Ye certes," quod the frere, "trusteth wel;
I took our dame the letter, under our sel."
"Now wel," quod he, "and somewhat schal I yive
Unto your holy convent whils that I lyve;
And in thyn hond thou schalt it have anoon,
On this condicioun, and other noon,
That thou depart it so, my deere brother,
That every frere have as moche as other,
Thys schaltow swere on thy professioun,
Withouten fraude or cavillacioun."
"I swere it," quod this frere, "upon my faith."
And therwith his hond in his he laith;
"Lo her myn hond, in me schal be no lak."
"Now thanne, put thyn hond doun at my bak,"
Sayde this man, "and grop wel byhynde,
Bynethe my buttok, there schaltow fynde
A thing, that I have hud in priveté."
"A!" thought this frere, "that schal go with me."
And doun his hond he launchede to the clifte,
In hope for to fynde ther a yifte.
And whan this syke man felte this frere
Aboute his tuel grope ther and heere,
Amyd his hond he leet the freere a fart;
Ther is no capul drawyng in a cart
That might have let a fart of such a soun.
The frere upstart, as doth a wood lyoun:
"A! false cherl," quod he, "for Goddes bones!
This hastow in despit don for the noones;
Thou schalt abye this fart, if that I may."
His meyné, which that herd of this affray,
Com lepand in, and chased out the frere.
And forth he goth with a foul angry cheere,
And fat his felaw, there as lay his stoor;
He lokid as it were a wylde boor,
And grynte with his teeth, so was he wroth.
A stordy paas doun to the court he goth,
Wher as ther wonyd a man of gret honour,

To whom that he was alway confessour;
This worthy man was lord of that village.
This frere com, as he were in a rage,
Wher that this lord sat etyng at his bord:
Unnethe mighte the frere speke a word,
Til atte last he sayde, "God yow se!"
This lord gan loke, and sayde, *Benedicite!*
What, frere Johan! what maner world is this?
I se right wel that som thing is amys;
Ye loke as though the woode were ful of thevys.
Sit doun anoon, and tel me what your gref is,
And it schal ben amendit, if that I may."
"I have," quod he, "had a despit to day,
God yelde yow, odoun in youre vilage,
That in this world is noon so pore a page,
That he nold have abhominacioun
Of that I have receyved in youre toun;
And yet ne grevith me no thing so sore,
As that this elde cherl, with lokkes hore,
Blasphemed hath our holy covent eeke."
"Now, maister," quod this lord, "I yow biseke."
"No maister, sir," quod he, "but servitour,
Though I have had in scole such honour.
God likith not that Raby men us calle,
Neither in market, neyther in your large halle."
"No fors," quod he, "tellith me al your greef."
This frere sayde, "Sire, an odious meschief
This day bytid is to myn ordre and to me,
And so *par consequens* to ech degré
Of holy chirche, God amend it soone!"
"Sir," quod the lord, "ye wot what is to doone;
Distempre yow nought, ye ben my confessour,
Ye ben the salt of therthe, and savyour:
For Goddes love, youre pacience ye holde;
Tel me your greef." And he anoon him tolde
As ye had herd bifore, ye wot wel what.
The lady of that hous ay stille sat,
Til sche had herd what the frere sayde.
"Ey Goddes moodir!" quod she, "blisful mayde!
Is ther ought elles? tel me faithfully."
"Madame," quod he, "how think ye yow therby?"

"How that me thynkith?" quod sche; "so
God me speede!
I say, a cherl hath doon a cherles deede.
What schuld I say? God let him never the!
His syke heed is full of vanyté.
I hold him in a maner frenesye."
"Madame," quod he, "I-wis I schal not lye,
But I in othir wise may be a wreke,
I schal defame him overal wher I speke;
The false blasfememour, that chargide me
To parten that wil not departed be,
To every man y-liche, with meschaunce!"
The lord sat stille, as he were in a traunce,
And in his hert he rollid up and doun,
"How hadde this cherl ymaginacioun
To schewe such a probleme to the frere?
Never erst er now herd I of such matiere;
I trowe the devel put it in his mynde.
In arsmetrik schal ther no man fynde
Biforn this day of such a questioun.
Who schulde make a demonstracioun,
That every man schuld have alyk his part
As of a soun or savour of a fart?
O nyce proude cherl, I schrew his face!
Lo, sires," quod the lord, with harde grace,
"Who ever herde of such a thing er now?
To every man y-like? tel me how.
It is impossible, it may not be.
Ey, nyce cherl, God let him never the!
The romblyng of a fart, and every soun,
Nis but of aier reverberacioun,
And ever it wastith lyte and lyt away;
Ther nys no man can deme, by my fay,
If that it were departed equally.
What, lo, my cherl, what, lo, how schrewedly
Unto my confessour to day he spak!
I hold him certeinly demoniak.
Now etith your mete, and let the cherl go play,
Let him go honge himself on devel way!"
Now stood the lordes squier at the bord,
That carf his mete, and herde word by word
Of al this thing, which that I of have sayd.
"My lord," quod he, "be ye nought evel payd,

I couthe telle for a gowne-cloth
To yow, sir frere, so that ye be not worth,
How that this fart even departed schulde be
Among your covent, if I comaunded be.
"Tell," quod the lord, "and thou schalt have anoon
A goune-cloth, by God, and by Seint Johan!"
"My lord," quod he, "whan that the wedir is fair,
Withoute wynd, or pertourbyng of ayr,
Let bring a carte whel her into this halle,
But loke that it have his spokes alle;
Twelf spokes hath a cart whel comunly;
And bring me twelve freres, wit ye why?
For threttene is a covent as I gesse;
Your noble confessour, her God him blesse,
Schal parfourn up the nombre of this covent.
Thanne schal they knele doun by oon assent,
And to every spokes ende in this manere
Ful sadly lay his nose schal ech a frere;
Your noble confessour ther, God him save,
Schal hold his nose upright under the nave.
Than schal this churl, with bely stif and tought
As eny tabor, hider ben y-brought;
And sette him on the whele of this cart
Upon the nave, and make him lete a fart,
And ye schul seen, up peril of my lif,
By verray proef that is demonstratif,
That equally the soun of it wol wende,
And eek the stynk, unto the spokes ende;
Save that this worthy man, your confessour,
(Bycause he is a man of gret honour)
Schal have the firste fruyt, as resoun is.
The noble usage of freres is this,
The worthy men of hem first schal be served.
And certeynly he hath it wel deserved;
He hath to day taught us so mochil good,
With preching in the pulpit ther he stood,
That I may vouchesauf, I say for me,
He hadde the firste smel of fartes thre;
And so wold al his covent hardily,
He berith him so fair and holily."
The lord, the lady, and ech man, sauf the frere,

Sayde that Jankyn spak in his matiere
As wel as Euclide, or elles Phtolomé.
Touchand the cherl, thay sayde that subtilté
And high wyt made him speken as he spak;
He nas no fool, ne no demoniak.
And Jankyn hath i-wonne a newe goune;
My tale is don, we ben almost at toune.

THE CLERKES TALE

" Sir Clerk of Oxenford," our hoste sayde,
" Ye ryde as stille and coy as doth a mayde,
Al newly spousèd, sittyng at the board;
This day I herd not of your mouth a word.
I trowe ye study som disputacioún;
But Salomon saith, every thing hath sesoún.
For Goddis sake! be thou of better cheere,
It is no tyme for to stody here.
Tel us som mery tale, by your fay;
For if a man is entred unto play,
He needes must unto that play assent.
But preche not, as freres do in Lent,
To make us for our olde synnes wepe,
Nor let thy tale make us for to slepe.
Tel us som mery thing of áventúres.
Youre termes, your coloúrs, and your figúres,
Keep them in store, til so be that ye endite
High style, as whan that men to kynges write.
Speke so playn at this tyme, we yow praye,
That we may understonde that ye saye."
This worthy Clerk benignely answerde;
" Sir host," quoth he, " I am under your word,
Ye have of us as now the governaúnce,
And therfor wil I do you óbeissaunce,
As fer as resoun askith verrily.
I wil you telle a tale, which that I
Lerned at Padowe of a worthy clerk,
Y-provèd by his wordes and his werk.
He is now ded, and naylèd in his chest,
And may God give his soule wel good rest!

Fraunces Petrark, the laureat poète,
Hightè this clerk, whos retoricke swete
Illumynd al Ytail of poetrie,
As Linian did of philosophie,
Or lawe, or other art particuler;
But deth, that wol not suffre us duellen here,
But as it were a twyncling of an eye,
Them bothe hath slayn, and alle shul we dye.
But forth to tellen of this worthy man,
That taughte me this tale, as I first bigan,
I say that he first with high stile enditith
(Er he the body of his talè writith)
A prologe, in the which describith he
Piemounde, and of Saluces the contree,
And spekith of Appenyne the hilles hye,
That be the boundes of al west Lombardye;
And of mount Vesulus in special,
Wher as the Po out of a wellè smal
Takith his firstè springyng and his source,
That est-ward ay increseth in his cours
To Emyl-ward, to Ferare, and to Venise,
The which a long thing werè to devyse.
And trewely, as to my juggement,
Me thinketh this prológe impertinent,
Save that he wold expounden his matére;
But this the tale is which that ye shal heere."

Ther is at the west ende of Italie,
Doun at the root of Vesulus the colde,
A lusty playn, abundaunt of plentee,
Wher many a tour and toun thou maist byholde,
That foundid were in tyme of fadres olde,
And many anothir délitable sight,
And Sáluces this noble contray hight.
A marquys whilom duellèd in that lond,
As did his worthy eldris him bifore,
Obedient and redy to his hond,
Were alle his servaunts, bothe lesse and more.
Thus in delyt he lyveth and hath of yore,
Biloved and dreaded, thurgh favour of fortúne,
Bothe by his lordes and by his comúne.
Withal he was, to speke of lineáge,
The gentlest knightè born in Lumbardye,

A fair persóne, and strong, and yong of age,
And ful of honour and of curtesie;
Discret y-nough to guiden his contré,
Savynge in somme things he was to blame;
And Walter was this yonge lordes name.
I blame him thus, that he considered nought
In tyme comyng what might him bityde,
But on his present pleasure was his thought,
As for to hauke and hunte on every syde;
Wel ny al othir cures let he slyde,
And eek he wolde not (that was worst of al)
Wedden a wyf for nought that might bifal.
Only that poynt his peple bar so sore,
That flocking on a day to him thay went,
And one of them, that wisest was of lore,
(Either bycause his lord wolde best assent
That he shuld telle him what his peple ment,
Or else that he coude wel shewe such matére)
He to the marquys sayd as ye shal here.
"O noble marquys, your humanitee,
Assureth us and giveth us hardynesse,
For now the matter is of necessitee,
That we to you may telle oure hevynesse;
Accept, o lord, now of your gentilesse,
That we with piteous hert to you complayne,
And let your eares not my vois disdeyne.
"Though I have nought to do in this matére
More than another man hath in this place,
Yit for as moche as ye, my lord so deere,
Have alway shewèd me favoúr and grace,
I dare the better ask of you a space
Of audience, to shewen oure request,
And ye, my lord, to do as seemeth best.
"For certes, lord, so wel we loven yow
And al your werk, and ever have doon, that we
Coude not ourselve lightly devysen how
We mighte lyve more in felicitee:
Save one thing, lord, if that your wille be,
That for to be a weddid man you list
Then were your pepel in there hertes at rest.
"Bow then your neck undir that blisful yoke
Of sovereigneté, nought of servíse,
Which that men clepe spousail or wedlok;

And think too, lord, among your thoughtes wise,
How that our dayes passe in sondry wyse;
For though we slepe, or wake, or rome, or ryde,
Ay fleeth the tyme, it wil no man abyde.
" And though your grene youthe floure to day,
In crepith age alway as stille as stone,
And deth menáceth every age, to slay
Ech man and al, for ther escapith none.
And as certéyn, as we knowe every one
That we shal deye, so uncertéyn we alle
Be of that day that deth shal on us falle.
" Accepte thenne of us the trewe entent,
That never yit refusid al youre hest,
And we wil, lord, if that ye wil assent,
Choose you a wyf, in short tyme atte lest,
Born of the gentilest and the highest
Of al this lond, so that it oughte seme
Honour to God and you, as we can deme.
" Deliver us out of al this careful drede
And tak a wyf, for hye Goddes sake.
For if it so bifel, which God forbede,
That deth to your lignage an end shuld make,
And that a straunge súccessoúr shulde take
Your heritage, O! wo were us alive!
Wherfor we pray yow hastily to wyve."
There meeke prayer and there piteous chere
Made the marquys for to have pitee.
" Ye wolde," quoth he, " myn owne peple deere,
To that I never thought constreigne me.
I me rejoysid in my libertee,
That selden tyme is founde in mariáge;
Where I was free, I must be in serváge.
" But natheles I see your trewe entent,
And trust unto your wit, and have doon ay;
Wherfor of my free wil I wil assent
To wedde me, as soon as ever I may.
But wher as ye have profred me to day
To choose me a wyf, I wol release
That choys, and pray you of that profre cease.
" For God it wot, that childer oft have been
Unlik there worthy eldris them bifore;
Bountee cometh al of God, nought of the strain
Of which thay be engendrid and i-bore.

I trust in Goddis bountee, and therfóre
My mariáge, and myn estat and rest,
To God I leve, he shal do atte best.
" Let me alone in choosing of my wif,
That charge upon my bak I wil endure.
But I you pray, and charge upon your lyf,
That what wyf that I take, ye me assure
To worshippe whil that hir lif may endure,
In word and werk, bothe heer and every where,
As she an emperoures doughter were.
" And forthermor thus shal ye swere, that ye
Against my chois shal never murmur or stryve,
For since I shal forgo my libertee
At your request, so may I ever thrive,
Where my own hert is set, ther wil I wyve.
And save ye wil assent in such manére,
I pray you spek no more of this matére."
With herty wil thay sworen and assenten
To al this thing, ther sayde no wight nay,
Bysechyng him of grace, ere that thay wenten,
That he wolde graunte them a certeyn day
Of his spousail, as soone as ever he may;
For yit alway the peple som what dredde
Lest that the marquys wolde no wyf wedde.
He graunted them a day, as seemed best,
On which he wolde be weddid certeynly;
And sayd he dede al this at there requeste.
And thay with humble hert obediently,
Knelyng upon there knees ful reverently,
Him thanken alle, and thus thay have an ende
Of their entent, and hom agein they wende.
And herupon he to his officeris
Comaundith al the feste to prepare,
And to his privé knightes and squyéres
Such charge gave to do his wil with care:
And thay obeyen his word in al manére,
And ech of them doth al his diligence
To do unto the feste reverence.

Pars Secunda

Nought fer fro this same palys honuráble,
Wher as this marquys shaped his mariáge,

Ther stood a thorp, of sighte delitáble,
In which the pore folk of that világe
Hadden their beste*s* and their pasturage,
Which after labour took their sustenaúnce,
Of which the erthe gaf them ábundaúnce.
Among this pore folk there duelt a man,
Which that was holden porest of them alle;
But hye God som tyme sende can
His grace unto a litel oxe stalle.
Janicula men of that thorp him calle.
A doughter had he, fair y-nough to sight,
And Grisilde*s* this yonge mayden hight.
But for to speke of vertuous beautee,
She was of al the fayrest under the sonne;
For porely i-fostered up was she,
No love of pleasure was in hir body run;
Far ofter of the welle than of the tunne
She dronk, and, for she wolde vertu please,
She knew wel labour, but no ydel ease.
But though this mayden tender were of age,
Yet in the brest of her virginitee
Ther was enclosèd rype and firm corráge;
And in gret reverence and charitee
Hir olde pore fader fostered she;
And, whil she spun, sheep on the feld she kept,
She never yet was idel til she slept.
And when she hom-ward com she wolde brynge
Wortes or other herbes tymes ofte,
The which she shred and seethed for her lyvýng,
And made hir bed ful hard, and nothing softe.
And ay she kept hir fadres lif aloft,
With every óbeissance and diligence,
That child may do to fadres reverence.
Upon Grisild, this pore créatúre,
Ful ofte times this marquys set his eye,
As he on huntyng rode par áventúre.
And when it fel he might hir wel espye,
He not with wantoun lokyng of folýe
His eyen caste, but in sober wyse
Upon hir look he wold him oft avise,
Comendyng in his hert hir wommanhede,
And eek hir vertu, passyng any other wight

Of so yong age, as wel in look as dede.
For though the peple have no gret insight
In virtu, he considereth aright
Hir goodness, and disposèd that he wolde
Wedde only her, if ever he wedde sholde.
The day of weddyng cam, but no wight can
Tellen at al what womman it shulde be;
For which mervayle wondrith many a man,
And sayden, whan they were in privitee,
" Wil not our lord yet leve his vanitee?
Wil he not wedde a wyf? allas the while!
Why wil he thus himself and us bigyle? "
But natheles this marquys hath done make
Of gemmes, set in gold and in azúre,
Broches and ryngs, for Grisildes sake,
And of hir clothing took he the mesúre,
By another mayde y-lik hir of statúre,
And eek of other ornamentes alle.
That unto such a weddyng shulde falle.
The tyme of morning of the same day
Approchith, that this weddyng shulde be,
And al the palys put was in array,
Bothe halle and chambur, each in their degré,
Houses of office stuffid with plentee,
Ther mayst thou see richesse of every kinde
That men from al Itayle may seke and finde.
This royal marquys, royally arrayd,
Lordes and ladyes in his compaignye,
The which unto the feste were y-prayed,
And of his retenu the bachelerie,
With many a sound of sondry melodye,
Unto the vilage, of which I yow tolde,
In this array the right way have they holde.
Grysild of this (God wot) ful innocent,
That for hir fashionèd was al the array,
To fetche water at a welle is went,
And cometh hom as soone as ever she may,
For wel she had herd say, that on that day
The marquys shulde wedde, and, if she might,
She wold have seyen somwhat of that sight.
She sayd, " I wol with other maydenes stonde,
That be my felawes, in oure dore, and see
The marquysesse, and I wil take in hond

To do at hom, as soone as it may be,
The labour which that longeth unto me,
And thenne may I at leysir hir byholde,
When they their way into the castel holde."
And as she wold over the thresshold goon,
The marquys cam and gan hir for to calle.
And she set doun her water-pot anon
Bisides the threshold of this oxe stalle,
And doun upon hir knees she gan to falle,
With sobre countenaunce she knelith stille,
Til she had herd what was the lordes wille.
This thoughtful marquys spak unto this mayde
Ful soberly, and sayd in this manére:
"Wher is your fader, Grísildes?" he sayde.
And she with reverence and humble cheere
Answerde, "My lord, he is al redy here."
And in she goth withouten more thought,
And to the marquys she hir fader brought.
He by the hond than takith this olde man,
And sayde thus, whan he him had aside:
"Janicula, I neither may nor can
Longer the plesaunse of myn herte hyde;
If that ye vouchesafe, what so betyde,
Thy doughter wil I take ere that I wende
As for my wyf, unto hir lyves ende.
"Thou lovest me, I wot it wel certéyn,
And wert my faithful liege-man i-bore,
And al that likith me, I dar wel sayn,
It likith thee and specially therfore
Tel me that poynt, as ye have herd bifore,
If that thou wilt unto that purpos agree,
As for thy sone-in-lawe to take me."
The sodeyn case the man astoneyd so,
That red he wax, abassht, and al quakyng
He stood, and scarce sayd he wordes mo,
But only this: "Lord," quoth he, "my willyng
Is as ye wol; against youre good likyng
I wil no thing, ye be my lord so dere;
Right as yow wolde, so governe this matére."
"Yit wil I," quoth this markys softely,
"That in thy chambre, I and thou and she
Meet al of us togider, and knowest thou why?
For I wil aske if that it hir wille be

To be my wyf, and in al to list to me;
And al this shal be doon in thy presénce,
I wil not speke out of thyn audience."
And in the chamber, while thay were aboute
Their talkyng, as ye al shal after here,
The peple cam unto the hous withoute,
And wondrid moche, in how honést manére
And tendurly she kept hir fader dere;
But most of al Grisildes wonder might,
For never had she seene such a sight.
No wonder is though that she were aferd,
To see so gret a gest come in that place;
She never had suche gestes seen or herd,
For which she lokèd forth with ful pale face.
But shortely this matere forth to chace,
These are the wordes that the marquys sayde
To this benigne, verray, faithful mayde.
"Grisyld," he sayde, "ye shal wel understonde,
It liketh to your fader and to me,
That I you wedde, and eek it may so stonde,
As I suppose ye wil that it so be;
But these demaundes aske I first," quoth he,
"That since it shal be doon in hasty wyse,
Wol ye assent, or wayte and you advyse?
"I say this, be ye redy with good hert
To al my wil, and that I frely may
As me best pleaseth do you laughe or smert,
And never ye to murmur, night or day;
And eek whan I say yea, ye say not nay,
Neyther by word, nor frownyng countenaunce?
Swer this, and here swer I our álliaunce."
Wondryng upon this word, quakyng for drede,
She sayde: "Lord, undigne I and unworthy
To take that gret honoúr that ye me bede;
But as ye wil your self, right so wil I;
And here I swere, that never wityngly
In werk, or thought, I wil you disobeye
Even to be deed, though me were loth to dye."
"This is ynough, Grisilde myn," quoth he.
And forth he goth with a ful sobre chere,
Out at the dore, and after that cam she,
And to the peple he sayd in this manére:

" This is my wyf," quoth he, " that stondith here.
Honoúr and love hir, I yow alle pray,
Who so me loveth; ther is no more to say."
And for that no thing of hir olde gear
She shulde brynge unto his hous, he bad
That wommen shuld despoilen hir right there,
Of which these ladyes were nought ful glad
To handle hir clothes wherin she was clad;
But natheles this mayde bright of hew
Fro foot to heed thay shrouded have al newe.
Hir heres have thay kempt, that lay untressed
Ful rudely, and with their fyngres smale
A crown upon hir heed thay have yplaced,
And set hir ful of brooches gret and smale.
Of hir array what shuld I make a tale?
Scarce the peple hir knew for hir fairnésse,
Whan she translated was in such richésse.
This marquis hath hir spousèd with a ryng
Brought for the same cause, and then hir sette
Upon on hors snow-whyt, and wel amblyng,
And to his palys, with no further let,
(With joyful peple, that hir ladde and mette)
Conveyèd hire, and thus the day they spende
In revel, til the sonne gan descende.
And shortly forth this tale for to chace,
I say, that to this newe marquisesse
God hath such favour sent hir of his grace,
That it seemed not by any liklynesse
That she was born and fed in rudenesse,
As in a cote, or in an oxe stalle,
But nourisht in an emperoures halle.
To every wight she waxen is so deere
And worshipful, that folk where she was born,
And from hir birthe knew hir yer by yere,
Scarce trowèd thay, but dorst have boldly sworn,
That to Janicle, of which I spak biforn,
No daughter she were, for as by cónjectúre
They thought she was another créatúre.
For though that ever vertuous was she,
She was encresèd in such excellence
Of maners goode, i-set in high bountee,
And so discret, and fair of eloquence,
So benigne, and so digne of reverence,

And coude so the peples hert embrace,
That ech hir loveth that lokith in hir face.
Nought only of Saluces in the toun
Publisshèd was the bountee of hir name,
But eek byside in many a regioún,
If one sayd wel, another sayd the same.
So spredde wide her bounté and her fame,
That men and wommen, as wel yong as olde,
Go to Saluces upon hir to byholde.
Thus Walter lowly, nay but royally,
Weddid with fortunat honestetee,
In Goddes pees lyveth ful esily
At home, and outward grace ynough hath he;
And for he saw that under low degree
Was ofte vertu y-hid, the peple him helde
A prudent man, and that is seen ful selde.
Nought only this Grisildes thurgh hir witte
Knew al the wayes of wifly homlynesse,
But eek when that the tyme requirèd it,
The comun profyt coude she wel redresse;
Ther was no discord, rancour, or hevynesse
In al that lond, that she coude not appese,
And wisly bryng them alle in rest and ese.
Though that hir housbond absent were anon,
If gentilmen, or other of hir contree,
Were wroth, she wolde brynge them at one,
So wyse and rype wordes hadde she,
And judgement of so gret equitee,
That she from heven sent was, as men wende,
Peple to save, and every wrong to amende.
Nought longe tyme after that this Grisilde
Was wedded, she a doughter hath i-bore;
Though she had lever hadde a manne childe,
Glad was this marquis and the folk therfore,
For though a mayden child come al byfore,
She may unto a manne child attaine
By liklihed, and she is not barrén.

Incipit Tertia Pars

Ther fel, as fallith many tymes mo,
Whan that this child hath soukèd but a lyte,
This marquys in his herte longith so

Tempten his wyf, hir promise for to wit,
That he might not out of his herte yit
Put this desir his wyfe for to assaye;
Needlesse, God wot, he thought hir to affraye.
He had assayèd hir ynough bifore,
And fond hir ever good, what needith it
To tempten hir, and alway more and more?
Though som men prayse it for a subtil wit,
But as for me, I praise it never a whit
To assay a wyf when that it is no neede,
And putten hir in anguish and in dreede.
For which this marquis wrought in this manére;
He com alone a-night ther as she lay,
With sterne face, and with ful troubled cheere,
And sayde thus, " Grislid," quoth he, " that day
That I you took out of your pore array,
And putte yow in estat of high noblesse,
Ye have not that forgeten, as I gesse.
" I say, Grisild, this present dignitee
In which that I have put you, as I trowe,
Let it not make you forgetful for to be
That I you took in pore estat ful lowe,
And with no welth, ye must your selve knowe.
Tak heed of every word that I you say,
Ther is no wight that herith it but we tway.
" Ye wot your self how that ye comen heere
Into this hous, it is nought long ago;
And though to me that ye be leef and deere,
Unto my nobles ye be no thing so.
Thay seyn, to them it is gret shame and wo
For to be subject and be in servàge
To thee, that born art of a smal villàge.
" And namely since thy doughter was i-bore,
These wordes have thay spoken douteles.
But I desire, as I have doon byfore,
To lyve my lif with them in rest and pees;
I may not in this case be rekkeless;
I must do with thy doughter for the beste,
Not as I wolde, but at my peples heste.
" And yit, God wot, this is ful loth to me.
But natheles withoute youre witynge
Wil I not do; but this wold I," quoth he,

" That ye to me agree in al this thing.
Shew now your paciens in your ássenting,
That thou me gavest and swor in yon villáge,
That day that makèd was oure mariáge."
Whan she had herd al this she nought betrayed
Neyther in word, in cheer, or countenaunce,
(For, as it semede, she was nought dismayed);
She sayde, " Lord, al lieth in your plesaunce;
My child and I, with hertly obeisaunce,
Be youres al, and ye may save or spille
Your ounе thing; werk al after your wille.
" Ther may no thing, so God my soulе save,
Plese you, that may at al displesen me;
Nor I desire no thing for to have,
Nor drede for to lose, save only ye,
This wil is in myn hert, and ay shal be,
No length of tyme or deth may this deface,
Nor chaunge my corrage to another place."
Glad was this marquis of hir answeryng,
But yit he feynèd as he were not so.
Al drery was his cheer and his lokýng,
Whan that he shold out of the chambre go.
Soon after this, a forlong way or tuo,
He prively hath told al his entent
Unto a man, and unto his wyf him sent.
A maner sergeant was this privé man,
The which that faithful oft he founden hadde
In thinges grete, and eek such folk wel can
Do execucioún in thinges badde;
The lord knew wel that he him loved and dradde.
And whan this sergeant wist his lordes wille,
Into the chamber he stalkèd him ful stille.
" Madame," he sayde, " ye most forgive it me,
Though I do things to which men me constreyn;
Ye be so wys, that ful wel knowe ye,
That lordes hestes we may not gainsayn.
Ye may biwayl it or ye may compleyn;
But men must needes unto their wil obeye
And so wol I, there is no more to seye.
" This child I am comaundid for to take."
And spak no more, but out the child he hente
Dispiteously, and gan a signe make,
As though he wold have slayn it, ere he wente.

Grisild must suffer al and al consent;
And as a lamb she sitteth meeke and stille,
And let this cruel sergeant do his wille.
Suspecious was the ill fame of this man,
Suspect his face, suspect his word also,
Suspect the tyme in which he this bigan.
Allas! hir doughter, that she lovèd so,
She wende he wold have burst hir herte a tuo;
But natheles she held her soft and stil,
Conformyng hir to al her housbondes wil.
But atte last to speken she bigan,
And mekely she to the sergeant preyde,
So as he was a worthy gentilman,
That she most kisse hir child, ere that it deyde.
And on hir arm this litel child she leyde,
With ful sad face, and gan the child to blesse,
And lullyd it, and after gan it kesse.
And thus she sayd in hir benigne vois:
"Farwel, my child, I shal thee never see;
But since I thee have markèd with the cross,
Of Jesu Criste blessèd may thou be,
That for us deyde upon a cros of tree;
Thy soule, litel child, I him bytake,
For this night shalt thou deyen—for my sake."
I trowe that to a nurse in this hard case
It had been sad this sighte for to see;
Wel might a moder than have cryed allas,
But natheles so stedefast was she,
That she endurèd al adversitee,
And to the sergeant mekely she sayde,
"Have her agayn your litel yonge mayde.
"Go now," quoth she, "and do my lordes heste;
But one thing wil I pray you of your grace,
That save my lord forbede you atte leste,
Bury this litel body in som place,
That bestes and briddes do it no trespáce."
But he no word wil to the purpos say,
But took the child and went upon his way.
This sergeant com unto this lord agayn,
And of Grisildes wordes and hir cheere
He tolde poynt for poynt, in short and playn,
And him presentith with his doughter deere.

Somwhat this lord hath pity in his manère,
But natheles his purpos held he stille,
As lordes do, whan thay wil have their wille;
And bad the sergeaunt that he privily
Sholde this childe ful softe wynde and wrappe,
With alle circumstaunces tendurly,
And cary it in a cofre, or in his lappe;
And upon peyne his heed off for to swappe
That no man shulde knowe of this entent,
Nor whence he com, nor whider that he went;
But at Boloyne, to his sister deere,
That at this tyme of Panik was countesse,
He shuld it take, and shewe hir this matére,
Byseching her to do her busynesse
This child to fostre up in gentilesse,
And whos child that it was he bad hir hyde
From every wight, for ought that mighte bytyde.
The sergeant goth, and hath fulfild this thing.
But to this marquys now retourne we;
For now goth he ful fast ymaginyng,
If by his wyves face he mighte see,
Or by hir word perceyve at al, that she
Were chaungèd, but he never chaunge coude fynde,
But ever the same y-like stille and kynde.
As glad, as humble, as busy in servíse
And eek in love, as she was wont to be,
Was she to him, in every maner wyse;
Nor of hir doughter nought one word spak she;
No chaunge at al for no adversitee
Was seyn in hir, and never hir doughter's name
She namèd hath, in ernest or in game.

Incipit Quarta Pars

In this estaat ther passèd be foure yer
Ere she with childe was, but, as God wolde,
A manne child she bar by this Waltier,
Ful gracious, and fair for to biholde;
And whan that folk it to his fader tolde,
Nought only he, but al in his contré, merye
Prayse God and thank him in humilitee.
When it was tuo yer old upon a daye

This markys purposèd in newe wyse
To tempt his wif agayne if that he may.
As though her daughteres deth wold not suffyse
O needeless another sacrifyse;
But weddid men know never no mesure,
Whan that thay fynde a pacient créatúre,
"Wyf," quoth this marquys, "ye have herd ere this
My peple hardly bere oure mariáge,
And namly since my sone y-boren is,
Now is it wors than ever in al our age;
The murmur sleth myn hert and my corráge,
For to myn eeres cometh the vois so smerte,
That it wel nigh destroyèd hath myn herte.
"Now saye thay thus, When Walter is agon
Than shal the blood of Janicula succede,
And be our lord, for other have we non.
Suche wordes saith my peple, out of drede.
Wel ought I of such murmur taken heede,
For certeynly I drede such senténce,
Though thay not spekn in myn audiénce.
"I wolde lyve in pees, if that I might;
Wherfor I am disposid utterly,
As I his sister servede in the night,
Right so thynk I to serve him privily.
This warn I you, that ye not sodeinly
Your selfe for this newe wo shuld not affray:
Be pacient, as beforen, I you praye."
"I have," quoth she, "sayd thus and ever shal,
I wil no thing, I wish no thing certayn,
But as you list; nought greveth me at al,
Though that my doughter and my sone be slayn
At your comaundement; this is to sayne,
I have not had not part of children twayne,
But first syknes, and after wo and payne.
"Ye be oure lord, do with your owne thing
Right as you list, ax thou no thing of me;
For as I left at hom al my clothing,
When I first com to you, right so," quoth she,
"Left I my wille and al my libertee,
And took your clothing; wherfor I you preye,
Do youre plesaúnce, I wil youre hest obeye.

" And certes, if I hadde prescience
Your wil to knowe, ere ye youre hest me tolde,
I wold it do withoute negligence.
But now I wot your pleasure, and what ye wolde,
Al your plesaúnce ferm and stable I holde,
For wist I that my deth wolde do you ease,
Right gladly wold I deyen, you to please.
" Deth may me make no comparisoún
Unto your love." And whan her constancie
This markys herd and saw, he cast adoun
His eyen tuo, and wondrith how that she
In pacience suffreth al this crueltee;
And forth he goth with drery countenaúnce,
But to his hert it was ful gret plesaúnce.
This ugly sergeaunt in the same wise
That he hir doughter tooke, right so he.
Or worse, if men can worse way devyse,
Hath caught hir sone, that ful was of beautee.
And ever in al so pacient was she,
That she no signe made of hevynesse,
But kist hir son, and after gan him blesse.
Save this she prayèd him, if that he mighte,
Her litel son he wold in erthe grave,
His tendre lymes, delicate to sight,
From foules and from bestes him to save.
But she no answer of him mighte have.
He went his way, as though he hadde no thoughte,
But to Boloyne he tenderly it broughte.
This marquis wondreth ever the longer the more
Upon hir pacience, and if that he
Hadde not sothly knowen therbifore,
That parfytly hir children lovèd she,
He wold have thought that of some subtiltee
And of malíce, or of cruèl corráge,
That she hadde suffred this with still viságe.
But wel he knew, that, next himself, certayn
She loved hir children best in every wise.
But now of wommen wold I aske fayn,
If these assayes mighten not suffice?
What coude a sterne housebonde more devyse
To prove hir wyfhode and her stedefastnesse,
And he contynuyng ever in sterneness?

But ther be folk of such condicioún,
That, when thay have a certeyn purpos take,
Thay can nought stynt of their intencioun,
But, right as though they bounden were to a stake,
Thay wil not of their firste purpos slake;
Right so this marquys fully hath purpósèd
To tempt his wyf, as he was first disposèd.
He watcheth, if by word or countenaunce
That she to him was chaungèd in viságe.
But never coude he fynde variaunce,
She was ay one in hert and in corage;
And ay the ferther that she was in age,
The more trewe, if that possíble were,
She was to him, and more kind of cheere.
For which it semyde this, that of them tuo
Ther was but one wil; for as Walter lest,
The same plesaúnce was hir wil also;
And, God be thankèd, al fel for the best.
She shewèd wel, for no worldly unrest
A wyf, as she hir self, no thinge sholde
Wish in effect, but as hir housbond wolde.
The slaunder of Walter ofte and wyde spradde,
That of a cruel hert he wikkedly,
For he a pore womman weddid hadde,
Hath mordrid bothe his children privily;
Such murmur was among them comunly.
No wonder is; for to the peples eere
Ther com no word, but that thay morderid were.
For which, wher as his peple al byfore
Had loved him wel, the slaunder of his diffame
Made it that thay him hatede more and more;
To be a mordrer is an hateful name.
But natheles, for ernest or for game,
He of his cruel purpos wold not stente.
To tempt his wyf was set al his intente.
Whan that his doughter twelf yer was of age,
He to the court of Rome, in suche wise
Informèd of his wille, sent his messáge,
Comaundyng them, such bulles to devyse,
As to his cruel purpos may suffise,
How that the pope, for his peples reste,
Bad him to wedde another; it were best.

I say, he bad that thay shulde countrefete
The popes bulles, makyng mencioún
That he hath leve his firste wyf to forget,
As by the popes dispensacioún,
To stynte rancour and discencioún
Bitwix his peple and him; thus sayd the bulle,
The which is publisshid and read atte fulle.
The rude pepel, as it no wonder is,
Wende ful wel that it had been right so.
But when these tydynges come to Grisildis,
I deeme that hir herte was ful wo;
But sobrely she stil for evermo
Disposid was, this humble créature,
Thadversitee of fortun al to endure;
Abydyng ever his wil and his plesaúnce,
To whom that she was given, hert and al,
As though he were her erthlie sufficiénce.
But shortly I this story telle shal,
This marquys writen hath in speciál
A letter, in which he shewith his intent.
And secretly to Boloyne he it sent.
To the erl of Panyk, which that long ago
Weddid his sister, prayd he specially
To bryngen hom agayn his children tuo
In honurable estaat al openly.
But one thing he him prayèd utterly,
That he to no wight, though men wold inquere,
Shuld tellen not that they his children were,
But say the mayde shuld i-weddid be
Unto the markys of Saluce anon.
And as this erl was prayèd, so dede he,
For at day set, he on his way is gon
Toward Saluce, and lordes many a one
In riche array, this mayden for to guyde,
Hir yonge brother rydyng by hir syde.
Arrayèd was toward hir mariáge
This fresshe mayde al ful of gemmes clere;
Hir brother which that seven yer was of age,
Arrayèd eek ful fressh in his manére;
And thus in gret noblesse and with glad chere
Toward Saluces shapyng their journay,
For day to day thay ryden on their way.

INCIPIT PARS QUINTA

Among al this, after his wikked uságe,
This marquis yit his wif to tempte more
Unto the utterest proofe of hir corráge,
Fully to have experiens and lore,
If that she were as stedefast as byfore,
He on a day in open audience
Ful boystrously hath sayd hir this sentence.
"Certes, Grisildes, I had y-nough plesaúnce
To have you to my wif, for your goodnésse,
And for youre trouthe, and for your obeissaúnce,
Nought for your lignage, nor for your richesse;
But now know I in verray sothfastnesse,
That in gret lordship, if I wel avyse,
Ther is gret servitude in sondry wyse;
"I may not do, as every ploughman may;
My peple me constreignith for to take
Another wyf, and crien day by day;
And eek the pope, rancour for to slake,
Consentith, and I must it undertake;
And trewely, thus moche I wol you saye,
My newe wif is comyng by the waye.
"Be strong of hert, and voyde anon your place,
And that same dower that ye broughten me
Tak it agayn, I graunt it of my grace.
Returne to your fadres hous," quoth he,
"No man may alway have prosperitee.
With even hert I counseil you endure
The strok of fortune or of áventure."
And she agayn answerd in pacience:
"My lord," quoth she, "I wot, and wist alway,
How that bitwixe your magnificence
And my povérte no wight can or may
Make comparisoun, it is no nay;
I never held me digne in no manére
To be your wyf, nor yet your chamberere.
"And in this hous, where ye me lady made,
(The highe God take I for my witnesse,
May he in mercy make my soule glade)
I never thought me lady or maistresse,

But humble servaunt to your worthinesse,
And ever shal, whil that my lyf may dure,
Aboven every worldly créatúre.
" That ye so longe of your benignitee
Held me in honour and nobilitee,
Wher as I was not worthy for to be,
That thonk I God, whom on my knees I preye
Recompence you, ther is no more to seye.
Unto my fader gladly wil I wende,
And with him duelle unto my lyves ende.
" Where I was fostred as a child ful smal,
Til I be deed my lyf ther wil I lede,
A widow clene in body, hert, and al;
For since I gave to you my maydenhede,
And am your trewe wyf, it is no drede,
Forbid it, God, that such a lordes wif
Shulde take another housbond al her lif.
" And of your newe wif, God of his grace
So graunte you wealth and prosperitee;
For I wil gladly yielden hir my place,
In which that I was blisful wont to be.
For since it liketh you, my lord," quoth she,
" That once were al my joy and myn hertes reste,
That I shal go, I wil go whan you leste.
" But wheras now ye profre me such dower
As I ferst brought, wel is it in my mynde,
It were my wrecchid clothes, no thing faire,
The whiche to me were hard now for to fynde.
O goode God! how gentil and how kynde
Ye semède by your speche and your viságe,
That day that makèd was our mariáge!
" But soth is sayd, allas, I fynd it trewe,
For in effect it provèd is on me,
Love is nought old as when that it is newe.
But certes, lord, for no adversitee
Even though I dye the deth, it shal not be
That ever in word or werk I shal repente
That I you gave myn hert in whole entente.
" My lord, ye wot that in my fadres place
Ye dede me strippe out of my pore wede,
And richely cladden me of your faire grace;
To you brought I nought else in myne neede

But faith, and nakednesse, and maydenhede;
And here agayn my clothyng I restore,
And eek my weddyng ryng—for evermore.
" The remenant of your jewels redy be
Within your chambur dore dare I sayn.
Naked out of my fadres hous," quoth she,
" I com, and naked must I torne agayn.
Al your plesaunce wold I fulfille fayn;
But yit I hope it be not youre entent,
That I smockless out of your paleys went.
" Ye coude not do so dishonést a thing,
That thilke body, in which your children leye,
Bifore the peple shulde, in my walkyng,
Be seen al bare: wherfore I you pray
Let me not lik a worm go by the way;
Remembre you, myn owne lord so deere,
I was your wyf, though I unworthy were.
" Wherfor, in guerdoun of my maydenhede,
Which that I brought and nought agayn I bere,
Vouchsafe to geve me only to my meede
But such a smok as I was wont to were,
That I therwith may cover the body of her
That was your wif; and here take I my leve
Of yow, myn owne lord, lest I you greve."
" The smok," quoth he, " that thou hast on thy bak,
Let it be stille, and ber it forth with thee."
But scarcely for teres the word he spak,
But went his way for ruthe and for pitee.
Byforn the folk hirselven strippith she,
And in hir smok, with heed and foot al bare,
Toward hir fader house forth is she fare.
The folk hir follow wepyng in hir weye,
And fortune ay thay cursen as thay gon;
But she fro wepyng kept hir eyen dry,
And in this tyme no word spak she noon.
Hir fader, that this tyding herd anon,
Cursed the day and tyme, that natúre
Shaped him to ben a lyve créatúre.
For oute of doute this olde pore man
Was ever suspect of hir high honoúr;
For ever he deemèd, since that it bigan,
That whan the lord fulfillèd had his hour,

Him wolde thinke that it were dishonoúr
To his estate, so lowe for to light,
And send hir hom as sone as ever he might.
To meet his doughter hastily goth he;
For he by noyse of folk knew hir comyng;
And with hir olde cote, as it might be,
He covered hir ful sorwfully wepynge;
To touch her body might he it nought bringe,
For rude was the cloth, and more of age
By many yeres than at hir mariáge.
Thus with hir fader for a certeyn space
Dwellith this flour of wifly pacience,
That neyther by her wordes nor hir face,
Byforn the folk, nor eek in this absence,
She shewèd that to hir was done offence,
Nor of hir high estate no rémembraúnce
At al hadde she, as by hir countenaunce.
No wonder is, for in hir gret estate
Hir spirit was ever in playn humilitee;
No courtly speeches, no maner delicate,
No pompe, no semblances of royaltee;
But ful of pacient benignitee,
Discrete, and prideless, ay honurable,
And to hir housbond ever meke and stable.
Men speke of Job, and most for his humblesse,
And as clerkes, when they wil, can wel endite,
Always of men; but in good sothfastnesse,
Though clerkes prayse wommen but a lite,
There can no man in humblesse him acquyte
As wommen can, nor can be half so trewe
As wommen be, save it be somthing newe.

Pars Sexta

From Boloyne is this erl of Panik y-come,
Of which the fame up-sprong to more and lasse,
And to the peples eeres alle and some
Was knowen eek, that a newe marquisesse
He with him brought, in such pomp and richesse,
That never was ther seyn with mannes eye
So noble array in al West Lombardye.
The marquys, which that made and knew al this,

Ere that this erl was come, sent his messáge
After the silly pore Grísildis;
And she with humble hert and glad viságe,
Not with a swollen hert in hir corráge,
Cam at his hest, and on hir knees hir sette,
And reverently and wyfly did him greet.
" Grisi'd," quoth he, " my wil is utterly,
This mayden, that shal weddid be to me,
Receyvèd be to morrow as royally
As it possible is in myn hous to be;
And eek that every wight in his degree
Have his estaat in seat and in servyse,
In high plesaunce, as I can best devyse.
" I have no womman súffisant certéyne
The chambres for to array in ordinance
After my wil, and therfor wold I feyne,
That thin were al such courtly governaúnce;
Thow knowest eek of old al my plesaunce;
Though ille thy garments be and thin arraye,
Do thou thy duetie atte leste weye."
" Nought only, lord, that I am glad," quoth she,
" To do your wil, but I desire also
You for to serve and plese in my degree,
Withoute feyntyng, and shal evermo;
And never for no happinesse or wo,
The ghost withinne myn herte shal never cease
To love you best with al trewe gentilesse."
And with that word she gan the hous to dight,
And tables for to sette, and beddes make,
And peynèd hir to do al that she might,
Preying the chamberers for Goddes sake
To hasten them, and faste swepe and shake,
And she the moste servisable of alle
Hath every chamber arrayèd, and his halle.
Abouten morning gan this lord alight,
That with him brought these noble children tweye;
For which the peple ran to see that sight
Of al the pompe and al the riche arraye.
And than at once amonges them thay seye,
That Walter was no fool, though that him lest
To chaunge his wyf; for it was for the best.

For she is fairer, as thay demen alle,
Than is Grisild, and tenderer of age,
And fairer fruyt bitwen them shulde falle,
And more plesaunt for hir high lynáge,
Hir brother eek so fair was of viság̃e,
That them to see the peple hath caught plesaúnce,
Comending now the marquys governaúnce.

O stormy poeple, unfirm and ever untrewe,
And undiscret, and chaunging as a vane,
Delytyng ever in rumour that is newe,
For lik the moone ay waxe ye and wane;
Deere at a grote your prayse and your disdeyn,
Youre word is fals, your service yvel previth,
A ful gret fool is he that you believeth.

Thus sayde the sober folke in that citee,
When that the peple gasèd up and doun;
For thay were glad right for the noveltee,
To have a newe lady in their toun.
No more of this now make I mencioun,
But to Grisild agayn wol I me addresse,
And telle hir constance, and hir busynesse.

Ful busy was Grisild in every thing,
That to the feste was appertinent:
Right nought was she abassht of hir clothing,
Though it were rude, and somwhat eek to-rent,
But with glad cheer she to the gate is went,
With other folk, to griete the marquisesse,
And after that doth forth hir busynesse.

With so glad chier his gestes she receyveth,
So connyngly eche one in his degree,
That no defaute no man apperceyveth,
But ay thay wondren what she mighte be,
That in so poor array was there to see,
And knewe such honour and such reverénce,
And worthily thay praysen hir prudence.

In al this mene-whil her wit she spente
This mayde and eek hir brother to comende
With al hir hert in ful plesaunt entent,
So wel, that no man coude her works amende;
But atte last whan that these lordes wend
To sitte doun to mete, he gan to calle
Grisild, as she was busy in his halle.

"Grisyld," quoth he, as it were in his play,
"How likith thee my wif and hir beautee?"
"Right wel, my lord," quoth she, "for in good fay,
A fairer saw I never none than she.
I pray to God give hir prosperitee;
And so hope I, that he wil to you sende
Pleasaunce ynough unto your lyves ende.
"One thing warn I you and biseke also,
Hurte not ever with no tormentýnge
This tendre mayden, as ye have done mo;
For she is fostrid in hir norischinge
More tendrely, and to my súpposýnge
She coude not adversitee endure,
As coude a pore fostrid créatúre."
And when this Walter saw hir pacience,
Hir glade cheer, and no malice at al,
And he so oft hadde doon to hir offence,
And she ay sad and constant as a wal,
Continuyng ever hir innocence overal,
This sturdy marquys gan his herte addresse
To pity al hir wyfly stedefastnesse.
"This is ynough, Grisilde myn," quoth he,
"Be now no more agast, no more afraide.
I have thy faith and thy benignitee,
As wel as ever womman was, assayed
In gret estate, and poore estate arrayed:
Now knowe I, dere wyf, thy stedefastnesse;"
And hir in armes took, and gan hir kisse.
And she for wonder took of it no keepe;
She herde not what thing he to hir spoke,
She fared as she had stert out of a sleepe,
Til she out of hir masidnesse awoke.
"Grisild," quoth he, "biforen al this folke,
Thou art my wyf, none other wil I have,
Nor never had, so God my soule save.
"This is my doughter, which thou hast supposèd
To be my wif; that other faithfully
Shal be myn heir, as I have ay purpósèd;
Thou bare them in thy body trewely.
At Boloyne have I kept him privily;
Tak them agayn, for now mayst thou not seye,

That thou hast lost noon of thy children tweye.
" And folk, that other weyes have seyd of me,
I warn them wel, that I have doon this deede
For no malice, ne for no crueltee,
But for to assay in thee thy wommanhede;
And not to slay my children, (God forbede!)
But for to kepe them privily and stille,
Til I thy purpos knewe and al thy wil."
When she this herd, a-suoone doun she fallith
For piteous joy, and after her swoonýng
She bothe hir yonge children to hir callith,
And in hir armes piteously wepyng
Embraseth them, and tenderly kissyng,
Ful lik a moder with hir salte tear
She bathide bothe their visage and their hair.
O, such a piteous thing it was to see
Her swoonyng, and hir humble vois to heere!
" *Graunt mercy,* lord, God thank it you," quoth she,
" That ye have savèd me my childer deere.
Now care I never to be deed right here,
Since I stond in your love and in your grace,
Nor reek of deth, ne whan my spirit passe.
" O tender deere yonge children myne,
Youre woful moder ymagined stedefastly,
That cruel houndes or some foul vermýne
Had eten you; but God of his mercy,
And your benigne fader tenderly
Hath kept you safe." And in conclusioun
Al sodeinly she swappèd to erthe adoun.
And in hir swoon so sadly holdith she
Hir children tuo, whan she gan them tembrace
That with gret sleight and gret difficultee
The children from her arm they coude unlace.
O! many a teer on many a piteous face
Doun ran of them that stooden hir bisyde,
That scarce aboute hir mighte thay abyde.
Waltier hir gladith, and hir sorrow slakith,
She rysith up abasshèd from hir traunce,
And every wight hir joy and feste makith,
Til she hath caught agayn hir countenance,
Walter hir doth so faithfully plesaúnce,
That it was dayntee for to see how fayn

And glad thei were, now thay be met agayn.
These ladys, whan that thay her taken may,
Have taken hir, and into chambre gon,
And strippen hir out of hir rude array,
And in a cloth of gold that brighte shon,
With a coroun of many a riche stone
Upon hir hed, thay into halle hir brought;
And ther she was honoúrèd as hir ought.
Thus hath this piteous day a blisful ende;
For every man and womman doth his might
This day in mirth and revel to despende,
Til on the welkin shon the sterres bright;
Far more solemne in every mannes sight
This feste was, and gretter of costáge,
Than was the revel of hir mariáge.
Ful many a yer in high prosperitee
Lyven these tuo in concord and in rest,
And richely his doughter maried he
Unto a lord, one of the worthiest
Of al Ytaile, and thanne in pees and rest
His wyves fader in his court he kepith,
Til that the soule out of his body crepith.
His sone succedith in his heritage,
In rest and pees, after his fader day;
And fortunat was eek in mariage,
Though he put not his wif in such assay.
This world is not so strong, no, by my fay,
As it hath ben in olde tymes yore,
And herken, what this author saith therfore.
This story is sayd, not for that wyves sholde
Folwe Grisild, in her humilitee,
For this coude not be borne, no, though they wolde;
But for that every wight in his degree
Shulde be constant in adversitee,
As was Grisilde, therfore Petrark writeth
This story, which with high stile he enditeth.
For since a womman was so pacient
Unto a mortal man, wel more we oughte
Receyven al in quiet that God us sent.
Why sholde he not us prove, men that he wroughte,
But he not temptith no man that he boughte,

As saith seint Jame, if ye his epistle rede;
He provith folk al day, it is no drede;
And suffrith us, al for our exercise,
With sharpe scourges of adversitee
Ful ofte to be bete in sondry wise;
Nought for to knowe oure wille, for certes he,
Ere we were born, knew al our frailtee;
And for oure best is al his governaunce;
Let us thanne lyve in vertuous suffraunce.
But one word, lordes, herken ere I go:
It were ful hard to fynde now a dayes
Grisildes in a toun or three or tuo;
For if that thay were put to such assayes,
The gold of them hath now so badde allays
With bras, that though the coyn be fair at eye,
It wolde rather burst in tuo than ply.
For which heer, for the wyves love of Bathe,—
Whos lyf and alle of hir secte God meyntene
In their hy place where God them planted hath,—
I wil with lusty herte fresch and grene,
Saye you a song to glade you, I wene;
And lat us stynt of ernestful matére.
Herken my song, that saith in this manére.

Chaucers Farewel

Grisild is deed, and eek hir pacience,
And bothe togider buried in Itayle;
For which I crye in open audience,
No wedded man so hardy be to assayle
His wyves pacience, in hope to fynde
Grisildes,—for in certeyn he shal fayle.
O noble wyves, ful of high prudence,
Let no humilitee your tonges veil;
Nor let no clerk have cause or diligence
To write of you a story of such marvayle,
As of Grisildes, pacient and kynde,
Lest the Lean Cow yow swallow in hir entraile.
Follow Echo, that holdith no silence,
But ever answereth at each wordes tayle;
Be nought befoolèd for your innocence,
But sharply arm you in youre cote of maile;

Imprinte wel this lessoun on your mynde,
For comun profyt, since it may avayle.
Ye archewyves, stand ye at defens,
Since ye be strong, as is a gret camél,
Nor suffre not that men you do offens.
And slendre wives, cruel in batáyle,
Be eager as is a tyger yond in Inde;
Ay chatter as a mylle, I you counsaile.
Drede them not, do them no reverence,
For though thin housbond armèd be in mayle,
The arrows of thy crabbid eloquence
Shal perse his brest, and eek his vizor frail:
In jelousy I counsel thou him bynde,
And thou shalt make him cower as doth a quayle.
If thou be fair, when folk be in presénce
Shew thou thy visage and thin ápparaíle;
If thou be ugly, be free of thin expens,
To gete thee frendes do al thy travayle;
Be ay of chier as light as leaf in winde,
And let them care and wepe, and wryng and wayle.

THE MARCHAUNDES TALE

"Wepyng and wailyng, care and other sorwe
I knowe ynough, bothe on even and on morwe;"
Quod the Marchaund, "and so doon other mo,
That weddid ben; I trowe that it be so,
For wel I woot it fareth so with me.
I have a wyf, the worste that may be,
For though the feend to hir y-coupled were,
Sche wold him overmacche I dar wel swere.
What schuld I yow reherse in special
Hir high malice? sche is a schrewe at al.
Ther is a long and a large difference
Betwix Grisildes grete pacience,
And of my wyf the passyng cruelté.
Were I unbounden, al-so mot I the,
I wolde never eft come in the snare.
We weddid men lyve in sorwe and care,
Assay it who-so wil, and he schal fynde

That I say soth, by seint Thomas of Inde,
As for the more part, I say not alle;
God schilde that it scholde so byfalle.
A! good sir host, I have y-weddid be
Thise monethes tuo, and more not, pardé;
And yit I trowe that he, that al his lyve
Wyfles hath ben, though that men wold him rive
Unto the hert, ne couthe in no manere
Tellen so moche sorwe, as I now heere
Couthe telle of my wyfes cursednesse."
"Now," quod our ost, "Marchaunt, so God yow blesse!
Sin ye so moche knowen of that art,
Ful hertily tellith us a part."
"Gladly," quod he, "but of myn oughne sore
For sory hert I telle may na more."

Whilom ther was dwellyng in Lombardy
A worthy knight, that born was of Pavy,
In which he lyved in gret prosperité;
And fourty yer a wifles man was he,
And folwed ay his bodily delyt
On wommen, ther as was his appetyt,
As doon these fooles that ben seculere.
And whan that he was passed sixty yere,
Were it for holyness or for dotage,
I can not say, but such a gret corrage
Hadde this knight to ben a weddid man,
That day and night he doth al that he can
Taspye wher that he mighte weddid be;
Praying our Lord to graunte him, that he
Might oones knowen of that blisful lif
That is bitwix an housbond and his wyf,
And for to lyve under that holy bond
With which God first man to womman bond.
"Noon other lif," sayd he, "is worth a bene;
For wedlok is so holy and so clene,
That in this world it is a paradis."
Thus sayde this olde knight, that was so wys.
And certeinly, as soth as God is king,
To take a wyf is a glorious thing,
And namely whan a man is old and hoor,
Than is a wyf the fruyt of his tresor;

Than schuld he take a yong wif and a fair,
On which he might engendre him an hair,
And lede his lyf in mirthe and solace,
Wheras these bachileres synge allas,
Whan that thay fynde eny adversité
In love, which is but childes vanité.
And trewely it sit wel to be so,
That bachilers have ofte peyne and wo;
On brutil ground thay bulde, and brutelnesse
Thay fynde, whan thay wene sikernesse;
Thay lyve but as a brid other as a best,
In liberté and under noon arrest;
Ther as a weddid man, in his estate,
Lyvith his lif blisful and ordinate,
Under the yok of mariage i-bounde,
Wel may his herte in joye and blisse abounde;
For who can be so buxom as a wyf?
Who is so trewe and eek so ententyf
To kepe him, seek and hool, as is his make?
For wele or woo sche wol him not forsake.
Sche is not wery him to love and serve,
Theigh that he lay bedred til that he sterve.
And yet som clerkes seyn it is not so,
Of whiche Theofrast is oon of tho.
What fors though Theofraste liste lye?
Ne take no wif, quod he, for housbondrye,
As for to spare in houshold thy dispense;
A trewe servaunt doth more diligence
Thy good to kepe, than thin oughne wif,
For sche wol clayme half part in al hir life.
And if that thou be seek, so God me save,
Thyne verray frendes or a trewe knave
Wol kepe the bet than sche that waytith ay
After thy good, and hath doon many a day.
And if that thou take a wif, be war
Of oon peril, which declare I ne dar.
  This entent, and an hundred sithe wors,
Writith this man, ther God his bones curs.
But take no keep of al such vanité;
Deffy Theofrast, and herkne me.
A wyf is Goddes yifte verrayly;
Al other maner yiftes hardily,
As landes, rentes, pasture, or comune,

Or other moeblis, ben yiftes of fortune,
That passen as a schadow on a wal.
But dred not, if I playnly telle schal,
A wyf wil last and in thin hous endure,
Wel lenger than the lust peradventure.
Mariage is a ful gret sacrament;
He which hath no wif I hold him schent;
He lyveth helples, and is al desolate
(I speke of folk in seculer estate).
And herken why, I say not this for nought,
That womman is for mannes help i-wrought.
The heighe God, whan he had Adam maked,
And saugh him al aloone body naked,
God of his grete goodnes sayde thanne,
Let us now make an helpe to this manne
Lyk to himself; and than he made Eve.
Her may ye see, and here may ye preve,
That wyf is mannes help and his comfort,
His paradis terrestre and his desport.
So buxom and so vertuous is sche,
Thay mosten neede lyve in unité;
O fleisch thay ben, and on blood, as I gesse,
Have but oon hert in wele and in distresse.
A wyf? a! seinte Mary, *benedicite*,
How might a man have eny adversité
That hath a wyf? certes I can not saye.
The joye that is betwixen hem twaye.
Ther may no tonge telle or herte thinke.
If he be pore, sche helpith him to swynke;
Sche kepith his good, and wastith never a del;
And al that her housbond list, sche likith it wel;
Sche saith nought oones nay, whan he saith ye;
Do this, saith he; al redy, sir, saith sche.
O blisful ordre, o wedlok precious!
Thou art so mery, and eek so vertuous,
And so comendid, and approved eek,
That every man that holt him worth a leek,
Upon his bare knees ought al his lyf
Thanken his God, that him hath sent a wif,
Or praye to God oon him for to sende
To be with him unto his lyves ende.
For than his lyf is set in sikernesse;
He may not be deceyved, as I gesse,

So that he worche after his wyfes red;
Than may be boldely bere up his heed,
Thay ben so trewe, and also so wyse,
For whiche, if thou wolt do as the wyse,
Do alway so, as womman wol the rede.
Lo how that Jacob, as the clerkes rede,
By good counseil of his moder Rebecke,
Band the kydes skyn aboute his nekke;
For which his fader benesoun he wan.
Lo Judith, as the story telle can,
By wys counseil sche Goddes poepel kepte,
And slough him Oliphernus whil he slepte.
Lo Abygaille, by good counseil how sche
Sayvd hir housbond Nabal, whan that he
Schold han ben slayn. And loke, Hester also
By good counseil delivered out of wo
The poeple of God, and made him Mardoche
Of Assuere enhaunsed for to be.
Ther nys no thing in gre superlatif
(As saith Senec) above an humble wyf.
Suffre thy wyves tonge, as Catoun byt,
She schal comaunde, and thou schalt suffre it,
And yit sche wil obeye of curtesye.
A wif is keper of thin housbondrye:
Wel may the sike man wayle and wepe,
Ther as ther is no wyf the house to kepe.
I warne the, if wisly thou wilt wirche,
Love wel thy wyf, as Crist loveth his chirche;
If thou lovest thiself, thou lovest thy wyf.
No man hatith his fleissch, but in his lif
He fostrith it, and therfore warne I the
Cherissh thy wyf, or thou schalt never the.
Housbond and wif, what so men jape or pleye,
Of worldly folk holden the righte weye;
Thay ben so knyt, ther may noon harm bytyde,
And nameliche upon the wyves syde.
For which this January, of which I tolde,
Considered hath inwith his dayes olde
The lusty lif, the vertuous quiete,
That is in mariage honey-swete.
And for his frendes on a day he sente
To tellen hem theffect of his entente.
With face sad, he hath hem this tale told;

He sayde, " Frendes, I am hoor and old,
And almost (God woot) at my pittes brinke,
Upon my soule som-what most I thynke.
I have my body folily dispendid,
Blessed be God that it schal be amendid;
For I wil be certeyn a weddid man,
And that anoon in al the hast I can,
Unto som mayde, fair and tender of age.
I pray yow helpith for my mariage
Al sodeynly, for I wil not abyde;
And I wil fonde tespien on my syde,
To whom I may be weddid hastily.
But for als moche as ye ben mo than I,
Ye schul rather such a thing aspien
Than I, and wher me lust best to allien.
But oo thing warne I yow, my frendes deere,
I wol noon old wyf have in no manere;
Sche schal not passe sixtene yer certayn.
Old fleisch and young fleisch, that wold I have
ful fayn.
Bet is," quod he, " a pyk than a pikerel,
And bet than olde boef is the tendre vel
I wil no womman twenty yer of age,
It nys but bene-straw and gret forage.
And eek these olde wydewes (God it woot)
Thay can so moche craft of Wades boot,
So moche broken harm whan that hem list,
That with hem schuld I never lyven in rest.
For sondry scolis maken subtil clerkes;
Womman of many a scole half a clerk is.
But certeyn, a yong thing may men gye,
Right as men may warm wax with hondes plye.
Wherfor I say yow plenerly in a clause,
I wil noon old wyf han right for that cause.
For if so were I hadde so meschaunce,
That I in hir ne couthe have no plesaunce,
Then schuld I lede my lyf in advoutrie,
And go streight to the devel whan I dye.
Ne children schuld I noon upon hir geten;
Yet were me lever houndes hadde me eten,
Than that myn heritage schulde falle
In straunge hond; and thus I telle yow alle.
I doute not, I wot the cause why

Men scholde wedde; and forthermor woot I,
Ther spekith many man of mariage,
That wot nomore of it than wot my page
For whiche causes man schulde take a wyf.
If he ne may not chast be by his lif,
Take him a wif with gret devocioun,
Bycause of lawful procreacioun
Of children, to thonour of God above,
And not oonly for paramour and for love;
And for thay schulde leccherye eschiewe,
And yeld our dettes whan that it is due;
Or for that ilk man schulde helpen other
In meschief, as a suster schal to the brother,
And lyve in chastité ful hevenly.
But, sires, by your leve, that am not I,
For God be thanked, I dar make avaunt,
I fele my lemys stark and suffisaunt
To doon al that a man bilongeth unto;
I wot my selve best what I may do.
"Though I be hoor, I fare as doth a tree,
That blossemith er that the fruyt i-waxe be,
A blossemy tre is neither drye ne deed;
I fele me no-wher hoor but on myn heed.
Myn herte and alle my lymes ben as greene,
As laurer thurgh the yeer is for to seene.
And synnes ye han herd al myn entente,
I pray yow to my wille that ye assente."
Diverse men diversly him tolde
Of mariage many ensamples olde;
Some blamed it, some praised it certayn;
But atte laste, schortly for to sayn,
(As alday fallith altercacioun,
Bitwixe frendes in despitesoun)
Ther fel a strif bitwen his bretheren tuo,
Of which that oon was clepid Placebo,
Justinus sothly cleped was that other.
Placebo sayde: "O January, brother,
Ful litel need hadde ye, my lord so deere,
Counseil to axe of eny that is heere;
But that ye ben so ful of sapience,
That yow ne likith for your heigh prudence
To wayve fro the word of Salamon.
This word, said he, unto us everychoon:

Werk al thing by counsail, thus sayd he,
And thanne schaltow nought repente the.
But though that Salamon speke such a word,
Myn owne deere brother and my lord,
So wisly God bring my soule at ese and rest,
I holde your oughne counseil is the best.
For, brother myn, of me tak this motif,
I have now ben a court-man al my lyf,
And God wot, though that I unworthy be,
I have standen in ful gret degre
Abouten lordes in ful high estat;
Yit had I never with noon of hem debaat,
I never hem contraried trewely.
I wot wel that my lord can more than I;
What that he saith, I hold it ferm and stable,
I say the same, or elles thing semblable.
A ful gret fool is eny counselour,
That servith any lord of high honour,
That dar presume, or oones thenken it,
That his counseil schulde passe his lordes wit.
Nay, lordes ben no fooles by my fay,
Ye have your self y-spoken heer to day
So heigh sentens, so holly, and so wel,
That I consente, and conferme every del
Your wordes alle, and youre oppinioun.
By God ther is no man in al this toun
Ne in Ytaile, couthe better have sayd;
Crist holdith him of this ful wel apayd.
And trewely it is an heigh corrage
Of any man that stoupen is in age,
To take a yong wyf, by my fader kyn;
Your herte hongith on a joly pyn.
Doth now in this matier right as yow leste,
For fynally I hold it for the beste."
Justinus, that ay stille sat and herde,
Right in this wise he to Placebo answerde.
" Now, brother myn, be pacient I yow pray,
Syns ye have sayd, and herknith what I say:
Senek amonges other wordes wyse
Saith, that a man aught him wel avyse,
To whom he yiveth his lond or his catel.
And syns I aught avyse me right wel,
To whom I yive my good away fro me,

Wel more I aught avised for to be
To whom I yive my body; for alwey
I warn yow wel it is no childes pley
To take a wyf withoute avisement.
Men most enquere (this is myn assent)
Wher sche be wys, or sobre, or dronkelewe,
Or proud, or eny other way a schrewe,
A chyder, or a wastour of thy good,
Or riche or pore, or elles man is wood.
Al be it so, that no man fynde schal
Noon in this world, that trottith hool in al,
Neyther man, ne best, such as men can devyse.
But natheles it aught y-nough suffise
With any wyf, if so were that sche hadde
Mo goode thewes than hir vices badde;
And al this askith leyser to enquere.
For God woot, I have weped many a tere
Ful prively, syns I have had a wyf.
Prayse who so wil a weddid mannes lif,
Certes I fynd in it but cost, and care,
And observaunce of alle blisses bare.
And yit, God woot, myn neighebours aboute,
And namely of wommen many a route,
Sayn that I have the moste stedefast wyf,
And eek the meekest oon that berith lyf;
But I woot best, wher wryngith me my scho.
Ye maye for me right as yow liste do.
Avysith yow, ye ben a man of age,
How that ye entren into mariage;
And namly with a yong wif and a fair.
By Him that made water, eorthe, and air,
The yongest man, that is in al this route,
Is busy ynough to bring it wel aboute
To have his wif alloone, trustith me;
Ye schul not please hir fully yeres thre,
This is to saye, to doon hir ful plesaunce.
A wyf axith ful many an observaunce.
I pray yow that ye be not evel apayd."
"Wel," quod this January, "and hastow sayd?
Straw for thy Senec, and for thy proverbis!
I counte nought a panyer ful of herbes
Of scole termes; wiser men than thow,
As I have sayd, assenten her right now

Unto my purpose: Placebo, what say ye?"
"I say it is a cursed man," quod he,
"That lettith matrimoigne sicurly."
And with that word thay rysen up sodeinly,
And ben assented fully, that he scholde
Be weddid whan him lust, and wher he wolde.
The fantasy and the curious busynesse
Fro day to day gan in the soule impresse
Of January aboute his mariage.
Many a fair schap, and many a fair visage,
Ther passith thorugh his herte night by night.
As who so took a mirrour polissched bright,
And set it in a comun market place,
Than schuld he se many a figure pace
By his mirour; and in the same wise
Gan January in his thought devyse
Of maydens, which that dwellid him bisyde;
He wiste not where that he might abyde.
For though that oon have beauté in hir face,
Another stant so in the poeples grace
For hir sadness and hir benignité,
That of the poeple grettest vois hath sche;
And som were riche and hadde badde name.
But natheles, bitwix ernest and game,
He atte last appoynted him anoon,
And let al other fro his herte goon,
And ches hir of his oughne auctorité,
For love is blynd al day, and may not se.
And whan he was into the bedde brought,
He purtrayed in his hert and in his thought
Hir freische beauté, and hir age tendre,
Hir myddel smal, hir armes long and sclendre,
Hir wise governaunce, hir gentilnesse,
Hir wommanly beryng, and hir sadnesse.
And whan that he on hir was condescendid,
Him thought his chois mighte nought ben amendid:
For whan that he himself concludid hadde,
Him thought ech other mannes witte so badde,
That impossible it were to repplie
Agayn his choys: this was his fantasie.
His frendes sent he to, at his instaunce,
And prayed hem to doon him that plesaunce,

That hastily thay wolde to him come;
He wold abrigge her labour alle and some.
Nedith no more for him to gon ne ryde,
He was appoynted ther he wold abyde.
Placebo cam, and eek his frendes soone,
And althirfirst he bad hem alle a boone,
That noon of hem noon argumentis make
Agayn the purpos which that he hadde take;
Which purpos was plesaunt to God, sayd he,
And verray ground of his prosperité.
He sayde, ther was a mayden in the toun,
Which that of beauté hadde gret renoun,
Al were it so, sche were of smal degre,
Suffisith him hir youthe and hir beauté;
Which mayde, he sayd, he wold have to his wyf,
To lede in ease and holinesse his lyf;
And thankede God, that he might have hir al,
That no wight with his blisse parten schal;
And preyed hem to laboure in this neede,
And schapen that he faile not to speede.
For than he sayd, his spirit was at ease;
"Than is," quod he, "no thing may me displease,
Save oon thing prikkith in my conscience,
The which I wil reherse in your presence.
I have herd sayd," quod he, "ful yore ago,
Ther may no man have parfyt blisses tuo,
That is to say, in erthe and eek in hevene.
For though he kepe him fro the synnes sevene,
And eek from ylk a braunche of thilke tre,
Yit is ther so parfyt felicité
And so gret ease and lust in mariage,
That ever I am agast now in myn age,
That I schal lede now so mery a lyf,
So delicat, withoute wo and stryf,
That I schal have myn heven in erthe heere.
For sith that verrey heven is bought so deere
With tribulacioun and gret penaunce,
How schuld I thanne, that live in such plesaunce
As alle wedded men doon with her wyves,
Come to blisse ther Crist eterne on lyve is?
This is my drede, and ye, my bretheren tweye,
Assoliith me this questioun, I yow preye."

Justinus, which that hated his folye,
Answerd anoon right in his japerie;
And for he wold his longe tale abrigge,
He wolde noon auctorité alegge,
But sayde, " Sir, so ther be noon obstacle
Other than this, God of his high miracle,
And of his mercy may so for yow wirche,
That er ye have your rightes of holy chirche
Ye may repente of weddid mannes lyf,
In which ye sayn ther is no wo ne stryf;
And ellis God forbede, but he sente
A weddid man grace him to repente
Wel ofte, rather than a sengle man.
And therfor, sire, the beste reed I can,
Dispaire yow nought, but have in youre memorie,
Peradventure she may be your purgatorie;
Sche may be Goddes mene and Goddes whippe;
Than schal your soule up to heven skippe
Swyfter than doth an arwe out of a bowe.
I hope to God herafter ye shuln knowe,
That ther nys noon so gret felicité
In mariage, ne nevermor schal be,
That you schal lette of your savacioun,
So that ye use, as skile is and resoun,
The lustes of your wyf attemperely,
And that ye please hir not to amorously;
And that ye kepe yow eek from other synne.
My tale is doon, for my witt is thynne.
Beth not agast hereof, my brother deere,
But let us waden out of this matiere.
The wif of Bathe, if ye han understonde,
Of mariage, which ye han now in honde,
Declared hath ful wel in litel space;
Fareth now wel, God have yow in his grace."
And with that word this Justinus and his brother
Han tak her leve, and ech of hem of other.
And whan they saughe that it moste needis be,
Thay wroughten so by sleight and wys treté,
That sche this mayden, which that Mayus highte,
As hastily as ever that sche mighte,
Schal weddid be unto this Januarie.

I trow it were to longe yow to tarie,
If I yow tolde of every scrit and bond,
By which that sche was feoffed in his lond;
Or for to herken of hir riche array.
But finally y-comen is that day,
That to the chirche bothe ben thay went,
For to receyve the holy sacrement.
Forth comth the preost, with stoole about his necke,
And bad hir be lik Sarra and Rebecke
In wisdom and in trouth of mariage;
And sayd his orisouns, as is usage,
And crouched hem, and bad God schuld hem blesse
And made al secur ynowgh with holinesse.
Thus ben thay weddid with solempnité;
And atte fest sittith he and sche
With othir worthy folk upon the deys.
Al ful of joy and blis is that paleys,
And ful of instrumentz, and of vitaile,
The moste deintevous of al Ytaile.
Biforn hem stood such instruments of soun,
That Orpheus, ne of Thebes Amphioun,
Ne maden never such a melodye.
At every cours ther cam loud menstralcye,
That never tromped Joab for to heere,
Ne he Theodomas yit half so cleere
At Thebes, whan the cite was in doute.
Bachus the wyn hem schenchith al aboute,
And Venus laughith upon every wight,
(For January was bycome hir knight,
And wolde bothe assayen his corrage
In liberté and eek in mariage)
And with hir fuyrbrond in hir hond aboute
Daunceth bifore the bryde and al the route.
And certeynly I dar right wel saye this,
Imeneus, that god of weddyng is,
Seigh never his lif so mery a weddid man.
Holde thy pees, thow poete Marcian,
That writest us that ilke weddyng merye
Of hir Philologie and him Mercurie,
And of the songes that the Muses songe;
To smal is bothe thy penne and eek thy tonge

For to descrive of this mariage.
Whan tender youthe hath weddid stoupyng age,
Ther is such mirthe that it may not be write;
Assaieth it your self, than may ye wyte
If that I lye or noon in this mateere.
Mayus, that sit with so benigne a cheere,
Hir to bihold it semede fayerye;
Queen Esther lokede never with such an ye
On Assuere, so meke a look hath sche;
I may not yow devyse al hir beauté;
But thus moche of hir beauté telle I may,
That sche was lyk the brighte morw of May,
Fulfild of alle beauté and plesaunce.
This January is ravyscht in a traunce,
At every tyme he lokith in hir face,
But in his hert he gan hir to manace,
That he that night in armes wold hir streyne
Harder than ever Paris did Eleyne.
But natheles yit had he gret pité
That thilke night offenden hir most he,
And thought: "Alas! O tendre creature,
Now wolde God ye mighte wel endure
Al my corrage, it is so scharp and keene;
I am agast ye schul it not susteene.
For God forbede, that I dede al my might.
Now wolde God that it were woxe night,
And that the night wolde stonden evermo.
I wolde that al this poeple were ago."
And fynally he doth al his labour,
As he best mighte, savyng his honour,
To hast hem from the mete in subtil wise.
The tyme cam that resoun was to ryse,
And after that men daunce, and drynke faste
And spices al about the hous thay caste,
And ful of joy and blis is every man,
Al but a squier, that hight Damyan,
Which karf to-for the knight ful many a day;
He was so ravyssht on his lady May,
That for the verray peyne he was nigh wood:
Almost he swelt and swowned as he stood;
So sore hath Venus hurt him with hir brond,
As that sche bar it daunsyng in hir hond.
And to his bed he went him hastily;

No more of him as at this tyme telle I;
But ther I lete him now his wo compleyne,
Til freisshe May wol rewen on his peyne.
O perilous fuyr, that in the bed-straw bredith!
O famuler fo, that his service bedith!
O servaunt traitour, false homly hewe,
Lyk to the nedder sleighe in bosom untrewe.
God schild us alle from your acqueintance!
O January, dronken in plesaunce
Of mariage, se how thy Damyan,
Thyn oughne squier and thy borne man,
Entendith for to do the vilonye;
God graunte the thin homly fo espye.
For in this world nys worse pestilence
Than homly foo, alday in thy presence.
Parfourmed hath the sonne his ark diourne,
No lenger may the body of him sojourne
On thorisonte, as in that latitude;
Night with his mantel, that is derk and rude,
Gan oversprede themesperie aboute;
For which departed is the lusti route
Fro January, with thank on every side.
Hoom to her houses lustily thay ryde,
Wher as they doon her thinges, as hem leste,
And whan they seigh her tyme thay goon to reste.
Soone after that this hasty Januarie
Wolde go to bed, he wolde no lenger tarie.
He drinkith ypocras, clarre, and vernage
Of spices hote, to encrese his corrage;
And many a letuary had he ful fyn,
Such as the cursed monk daun Constantin
Hath writen in his book de Coitu;
To ete hem alle he wolde no thing eschieu.
And to his privé frendes thus sayd he:
"For Goddes love, as soon as it may be,
Let voyden al this hous in curteys wise."
And thay han doon right as he wolde devyse.
Men drinken, and the travers drawe anoon;
The bruyd was brought abedde as stille as stoon;
And whan the bed was with the prest i-blessid,
Out of the chambre hath every wight him dressed.

And January hath fast in armes take
His freisshe May, his paradys, his make.
He lullith hir, he kissith hir ful ofte;
With thikke bristlis on his berd unsofte,
Lik to the skyn of houndfisch, scharp as brere,
(For he was schave al newe in his manere)
He rubbith hir about hir tendre face,
And sayde thus: "Allas! I mot trespace
To yow, my spouse, and yow gretly offende,
Or tyme come that I wol doun descende;
But natheles considerith this," quod he,
"Ther nys no werkmen, whatsoever he be,
That may bothe werke wel and hastily;
This wol be doon at leysir parfitly.
It is no fors how longe that we pleye;
In trewe wedlock coupled be we tweye;
And blessed be the yok that we ben inne,
For in our actes we mowe do no synne.
A man may do no synne with his wif,
Ne hurt himselven with his oughne knyf:
For we han leve to play us by the lawe."
Thus laborith he, til that the day gan dawe,
And than he takith a sop in fyn clarré,
And upright in his bed than sittith he.
And after that he song ful lowd and cleré,
And kissed his wyf, and made wantoun cheere.
He was al coltissch, ful of ragerye,
And ful of jargoun, as a flekked pye.
The slakke skyn about his nekke schaketh,
Whil that he song, so chaunteth he and craketh.
But God wot what that May thought in hir hert,
Whan sche him saugh up sittyng in his schert,
In his night-cappe, and with his nekke lene;
Sche praysith nought his pleying worth a bene.
Than sayde he thus: "My reste wol I take
Now day is come, I may no lenger wake."
And doun he layd his heed and sleep til prime.
And afterward, whan that he saugh his tyme,
Up riseth January, but freissche May
Holdith hir chamber unto the fourthe day,
As usage is of wyves for the best.
For every labour som tyme moot have rest,
Or elles longe may he not endure;

This is to saye, no lyves creature,
Be it of fissch, or brid, or best, or man.
Now wol I speke of woful Damyan,
That languyssheth for love, as ye schuln here;
Therefore I speke to him in this manere.
I say, "O sely Damyan, allas!
Answere to my demaunde, as in this caas,
How schaltow to thy lady, freissche May,
Telle thy woo? Sche wol alway saye nay;
Eek if thou speke, sche wol thy woo bywreye;
God be thin help, I can no better seye."
This seke Damyan in Venus fuyr
So brennith, that he deyeth for desir;
For which he put his lyf in aventure,
No lenger might he in this wo endure,
But prively a penner gan he borwe,
And in a letter wrot he al his sorwe,
In maner of a compleynt or of a lay,
Unto his faire freissche lady May.
And in a purs of silk, heng on his schert,
He hath it put, and layd it at his hert.
The moone that at noon was thilke day
That January hadde weddid freissche May
In tuo of Taure, was into Cancre gliden;
So long hath Mayus in hir chambre abiden,
As custom is unto these nobles alle.
A bryde schal not eten in the halle,
Til dayes foure or thre dayes atte lest
I-passed ben, than let hir go to the fest.
The fourthe day complet fro noon to noon,
Whan that the heighe masse was i-doon,
In halle sitte this January and May,
As freissch as is the brighte someres day.
And so bifelle, that this goode man
Remembrid him upon this Damyan,
And sayde, "Seinte Mary! how may this be,
That Damyan entendith not to me?
Is he ay seek? or how may this bityde?"
His squiers, which that stoode ther bisyde,
Excusid him, bycause of his syknesse,
Which letted him to doon his busynesse;
Noon other cause mighte make him tarie.
"That me for-thinketh," quod this Januarie;

" He is a gentil squyer, by my trouthe,
If that he deyde, it were harm and routhe.
He is as wys, discret, and eek secré,
As any man I wot of his degré,
And therto manerly and servysable,
And for to be a thrifty man right able.
But after mete, as soon as ever I may,
I wol myself visit him, and eek May,
To doon him al the confort that I can."
And for that word him blessed every man,
That of his bounté and his gentilesse
He wolde so comfort in his seekenesse
His squyer, for it was a gentil deede.
" Dame," quod this January, " tak good heede,
At after-mete, ye with your wommen alle,
(Whan ye han ben in chambre out of this halle)
That alle ye goo to se this Damyan;
Doth him desport, he is a gentil man,
And tellith him that I wil him visite,
Have I no thing but rested me a lyte;
And spedith yow faste, for I wol abyde
Til that ye slepe faste by my syde."
And with that word he gan unto him calle
A squier, that was marchal of his halle,
And told him certeyn thinges what he wolde.
This freissche May hath streight hir wey i-holde
With alle hir wommen unto Damyan.
Doun by his beddes syde sat sche than,
Comfortyng him as goodly as sche may.
This Damyan, whan that his tyme he say,
In secré wise, his purs, and eek his bille,
In which that he i-writen had his wille,
Hath put into hir hond withouten more,
Save that he siketh wonder deepe and sore,
And softely to hir right thus sayd he;
" Mercy, and that ye not discover me;
For I am deed, if that this thing be kud."
This purs hath sche inwith hir bosom hud,
And went hir way; ye gete no more of me;
But unto January comen is sche,
That on his beddes syde sit ful softe.
He takith hir, and kissith hir ful ofte;

And layd him doun to slepe, and that anoon.
Sche feyned hir as that sche moste goon
Ther as ye woot that every wight moot neede;
And whan sche of this bille hath taken heede,
Sche rente it al to cloutes atte laste,
And into the privy softely it caste.
  Who studieth now but faire freissche May?
Adoun by olde January sche lay,
That slepith, til that the coughe hath him awaked;
Anoon he prayde stripen hir al naked,
He wold of hir, he sayd, have som plesaunce;
Hir clothis dede him, he sayde, some grevaunce.
And sche obeieth, be hir lief or loth.
But lest that precious folk be with me wroth,
How that he wroughte I dar not telle,
Or whethir it semed him paradys or helle;
But here I lete hem werken in her wise
Til evensong rong, and than thay most arise.
  Whethir it be by desteny or adventure,
Were it by influence, or by nature,
Or by constellacioun, that in such estate
The heven stood that tyme fortunate,
As for to putte a bille of Venus werkis
(For alle thing hath tyme, as seyn these clerkis)
To eny womman for to gete hir love,
I can not saye; but grete God above,
That knowith that noon acte is causeles,
He demeth of al, for I wil holde my pees.
But soth is this, how that this freissche May
Hath take such impressioun that day,
Of pité on this sike Damyan,
That from hir herte sche ne dryve can
The remembraunce for to doon him ease.
"Certeyn," thought sche, "whom that this thing displease
I rekke not, for her I him assure,
To love him best of eny creature,
Though he no more hadde than his scherte."
Lo, pité renneth soone in gentil herte.
Heer may ye see, how excellent fraunchise
In womman is whan thay narow hem avyse.
Som tyraunt is, as ther ben many oon,

That hath an hert as hard as is a stoon,
Which wold han lete sterven in the place
Wel rather than han graunted him her grace;
And hem rejoysen in her cruel pride,
And rekken nought to ben an homicide.
This gentil May, fulfillid of pité,
Right of hir hond a letter makede sche,
In which sche grauntith him hir verray grace;
Ther lakkide nought but oonly day and place,
Wher that sche might unto his lust suffise;
For it schal be right as he wol devyse.
And whan sche saugh hir tyme upon a day
To visite this Damyan goth May,
And subtilly this lettre doun sche thruste
Under his pylow, rede it if him luste.
Sche takith him by the hond, and hard him twiste
So secrely, that no wight of it wiste,
And bad him be al hool, and forth sche wente
To January, whan that he for hir sente.
Up ryseth Damyan the nexte morwe,
Al passed was his siknes and his sorwe.
He kembith him, he pruneth him and pyketh,
He doth al that unto his lady likith;
And eek to January he goth as lowe
As ever did a dogge for the bowe.
He is so plesaunt unto every man,
(For craft is al, who so that do it can)
That every wight is fayn to speke him good:
And fully in his ladys grace he stood.
Thus lete I Damyan about his neede,
And in my tale forth I wol procede.
Some clerkes holden that felitické
Stant in delit, and therfor certeyn he
This noble January, with al his might
In honest wise as longith to a knight,
Schop him to lyve ful deliciously.
His housyng, his array, as honestly
To his degre was maked as a kynges.
Amonges other of his honest thinges
He hade a gardyn walled al with stoon,
So fair a gardyn wot I nowher noon.
For out of doute I verrely suppose,

That he that wroot the Romauns of the Rose,
Ne couthe of hit the beauté wel devyse;
Ne Priapus ne mighte not wel suffice,
Though he be god of gardyns, for to telle
The beauté of the gardyn, and the welle,
That stood under a laurer alway greene.
Ful ofte tyme he Pluto and his queene
Preserpina, and al the fayerie,
Desporten hem and maken melodye
Aboute that welle, and daunced, as men tolde.
This noble knight, this January the olde,
Such deynté hath in it to walk and pleye,
That he wolde no wight suffre bere the keye,
Save he himself, for of the smale wyket
He bar alway of silver a smal cliket,
With which whan that him list he it unschette.
And whan he wolde pay his wyf hir dette
In somer sesoun, thider wold he go,
And May his wyf, and no wight but thay tuo;
And thinges which that weren not doon in bedde,
He in the gardyn parformed hem and spedde.
And in this wise many a mery day
Lyvede this January and freische May;
But worldly joye may not alway endure
To January, ne to no creature.
O sodeyn hap! o thou fortune unstable!
Lyk to the scorpioun so desceyvable,
That flaterist with thin heed whan thou wilt stynge;
Thy tayl is deth, thurgh thin envenymynge.
O britel joye! o sweete venym queynte!
O monster, that so subtily canst peynte
Thyn yiftes, under hiew of stedfastnesse,
That thou desceyvest bothe more and lesse!
Why hastow January thus deceyved,
That haddist him for thy fulle frend receyved?
And now thou hast byreft him bothe his yen,
For sorw of which desireth he to dyen.
Allas! this noble January fre,
Amyd his lust and his prosperité
Is woxe blynd, and that al sodeynly.
He wepith and he weyleth pitously;
And therwithal, the fuyr of jalousye

(Lest that his wif schulde falle in som folye)
So brent his herte that he wolde fayn
That som man bothe hir and him hadde slayn;
For neyther after his deth, nor in his lyf,
Ne wold he that sche were love ne wyf,
But ever lyve as wydow in clothes blake,
Soul as the turtil that lost hath hir make.
But atte last, after a moneth or tweye,
His sorwe gan aswage, soth to seye.
For whan he wist it may noon other be,
He paciently took his adversité;
Save out of doute he may not forgoon,
That he nas jalous evermore in oon;
With jalousie it was so outrageous,
That neyther in halle, ne in noon other hous,
Ne in noon other place never the mo
He nolde suffre hir to ryde or go,
But-if that he hadde hond on hir alway.
For which ful ofte wepeth friesche May,
That loveth Damyan so benignely,
That sche moot outher deyen sodeinly,
Or elles sche moot han him as hir leste;
She waytith whan hir herte wolde breste.
Upon that other syde Damyan
Bicomen is the sorwfulleste man
That ever was, for neyther night ne day
Ne might he speke a word to fressche May,
As to his purpos, of no such matiere,
But-if that January most it heere,
That had an hond upon hir evermo.
But natheles, by writyng to and fro,
And privé signes, wist he what sche mente,
And sche knew eek the fyn of his entente.
O January, what might it the availe,
If thou might see as fer as schippes saile?
For as good is blynd deceyved be,
As to be deceyved whan a man may see.
Lo, Argus, which that had an hundred eyen,
For al that ever he couthe poure or prien,
Yet was he blent, as, God wot, so ben moo,
That weneth wisly that it be nought so;
Passe over is an ease, I say no more.
This freissche May, that I spak of so yore,

In warm wex hath emprynted the cliket,
That January bar of the smale wiket,
With which into his gardyn ofte he wente,
And Damyan that knew al hir entente
The cliket counterfeted prively;
Ther nys no more so saye, but hastily
Som wonder by this cliket schal betyde,
Which ye schal heeren, if ye wol abyde.
O noble Ovyde, wel soth saistow, God woot,
What sleight is it though it be long and hoot,
That he nyl fynd it out in som manere?
By Piramus and Thesbe may men leere;
Though they were kept ful longe streyt overal,
Thay ben accorded, rownyng thurgh a wal,
Ther no wight couthe han found out swich a sleight.
For now to purpos; er that dayes eyght
Were passid of the moneth of Juyl, bifille
That January hath caught so gret a wille,
Thorugh eggyng of his wyf, him for to pleye
In his gardyn, and no wight but they tweye,
That in a morwe unto this May saith he:
" Rys up, my wif, my love, my lady fre;
The turtlis vois is herd, my douve swete;
The wynter is goon, with his raynes wete.
Come forth now with thin eyghen columbine.
How fairer ben thy brestes than is the wyne.
The gardyn is enclosed al aboute:
Com forth, my swete spouse, out of doute,
Thou hast me wounded in myn hert, o wyf;
No spot in the knew I in al my lif.
Com forth, and let us take oure desport,
I ches the for my wif and my comfort."
Such olde lewed wordes used he.
On Damyan a signe made sche,
That he schulde go biforn with his cliket.
This Damyan than hath opened the wiket,
And in he stert, and that in such manere,
That no wight it mighte see nor heere,
And stille he seet under a bussch. Anoon
This January, as blynd as is a stoon,
With Maius in his hond, and no wight mo,
Into his freische gardyn is ago,

And clappide to the wiket sodeinly.
"Now, wyf," quod he, "her nys but ye and I,
Thou art the creature that I best love;
For by that Lord that sit in heven above,
Lever ich hadde to dyen on a knyf,
Than the offende, deere trewe wyf.
For Goddes sake, thenk how I the chees,
Nought for no coveytise douteles,
But oonly for the love I hadde to the.
And though that I be old and may not se,
Beeth trewe to me, and I wol telle yow why;
Thre thinges, certes, schul ye wynne therby;
First, love of Crist, and to your self honour,
And al myn heritage, toun and tour.
I yive it yow, makith chartres as yow leste;
This schal ben doon to morw er sonne reste
So wisly God my soule bringe in blisse!
I pray yow first in covenaunt ye me kisse.
And though that I be jalous, wyt me nought,
Ye ben so deep emprinted in my thought,
That whan that I considre your beauté,
And therwithal the unlikly eelde of me,
I may nought, certes, though I schulde dye,
Forbere to ben out of your companye
For verray love; this is withouten doute.
Now kisse me, wyf, and let us rome aboute."
This freissche May, whan sche his wordes herde,
Benignely to January answerde,
But first and forward sche bigan to wepe:
"I have," quod sche, "a soule for to kepe
As wel as ye, and also myn honour,
And of my wifhod thilke tendre flour,
Which that I have ensured in your hond,
Whan that the prest to yow my body bond;
Wherfor I wil answer in this manere,
With the leve of yow, myn owen lord, so deere.
I pray to God that never dawe the day,
That I ne sterve, as foule as womman may,
If ever I do unto my kyn that schame,
Or elles I empaire so my name,
That I be fals; and if I do that lak,
Doth strepe me, and put me in a sak,
And in the nexte ryver do me drenche;

I am a gentil womman, and no wenche.
Why speke ye thus? but men ben ever untrewe,
And wommen han reproef of yow ever newe.
Ye have noon other contenaunce, I leve,
But speke to us of untrust and repreve."
And with that word sche saugh wher Damyan
Sat in the buissh, and coughen sche bigan;
And with hir fyngres signes made sche,
That Damyan schulde clymb upon a tre,
That charged was with fruyt, and up he wente;
For verrayly he knew al hir entente,
And every signe that sche couthe make,
Wel bet than January hir oughne make.
For in a letter sche hadde told him al
Of this matier, how he worche schal.
And thus I lete him sitte in the pirie,
And January and May romynge mirye.
Bright was the day, and bliew the firmament;
Phebus hath of gold his stremes doun i-sent
To gladen every flour with his warmnesse;
He was that tyme in Gemines, as I gesse,
But litel fro his declinacioun
Of Canker, Joves exaltacioun.
And so bifel that brighte morwen tyde,
That in that gardyn, in the ferther syde,
Pluto, that is the kyng of fayerye,
And many a lady in his compaignie
Folwyng his wif, the queene Preserpina,
Whiche that he ravysched out of Cecilia,
Whil that sche gadrede floures in the mede,
(In Claudian ye maye the story rede,
How in his grisly carte he hir fette);
This king of fayry than adoun him sette
Upon a bench of turves freissh and greene,
And right anoon thus sayd he to his queene:
"My wyf," quod he, "ther may no wight saye nay,
Thexperiens so preveth every day,
The tresoun which that womman doth to man.
Ten hundrid thousand [stories] tellen I can
Notable of your untrouth and brutelnesse.
O Salamon, wys and richest of richesse,
Fulfild of sapiens, and of worldly glorie,

Ful worthy ben thy wordes to memorie
To every wight, that wit and resoun can.
Thus praysith he yit the bounté of man;
Among a thousand men yit fond I oon,
But of wommen alle found I never noon
Thus saith the king, that knoweth your wikkednesse,
That Jhesus, *filius* Sirac, as I gesse,
Ne spekith of yow but selde reverence.
A wild fuyr and corrupt pestilence
So falle upon your bodies yit to night!
Ne see ye not this honourable knight?
Bycause, allas! that he is blynd and old,
His owne man schal make him cokewold;
Loo, wher he sitt, the lecchour, in the tre!
Now wol I graunten, of my majesté,
Unto this olde blinde worthy knight,
That he schal have ayein his eyghen sight,
Whan that his wyf wol do him vilonye;
Than schal he knowe al her harlotrye,
Bothe in reproef of her and other mo."
"Ye schal?" quod Preserpine, "and wol ye so?
Now by my modres Ceres soule I swere,
That I schal yive hir suffisaunt answere,
And alle wommen after for hir sake;
That though thay be in any gult i-take,
With face bold thay schul hemself excuse,
And bere hem doun that wolde hem accuse.
For lak of answer, noon of hem schal dyen.
Al had a man seyn a thing with bothe his yen,
Yit schul we wymmen visage it hardily,
And wepe, and swere, and chide subtilly,
So that ye men schul ben as lewed as gees;
What rekkith me of your auctoritees?
I wot wel that this Jew, this Salamon,
Fond of us wommen fooles many oon;
But though he ne fond no good womman,
Yit hath ther founde many another man
Wommen ful trewe, ful good, and vertuous;
Witnesse on hem that dwelle in Cristes hous,
With martirdom thay proved her constaunce.
The Romayn gestes eek make remembraunce
Of many a verray trewe wyf also.

But, sire, be nought wrath, al be it so,
Though that he sayd he fond no good womman,
I pray yow tak the sentens of the man;
He mente thus, that in sovereign bounté
Nis noon but God, that sit in Trinité.
Ey, for verrey God that nys but oon,
What make ye so moche of Salamon?
What though he made a temple, Goddes hous?
What though he were riche and glorious?
So made he eek a temple of fals godis,
How might he do a thing that more forbode is?
Pardé, als fair as ye his name emplastre,
He was a lecchour and an ydolastre,
And in his eelde he verray God forsook;
And if that God ne hadde (as saith the book)
I-spared him for his fadres sake, he scholde
Have lest his regne rather than he wolde.
I sette right nought of the vilonye,
That ye of wommen write, a boterflie;
I am a womman, needes most I speke,
Or elles swelle tyl myn herte breke.
For syn he sayde that we ben jangleresses,
As ever hool I moote brouke my tresses,
I schal not spare for no curtesye
To speke him harm, that wold us vilonye."
"Dame," quod this Pluto, "be no lenger wroth,
I yive it up: but sith I swere myn oth,
That I wil graunte him his sight agein,
My word schal stonde, I warne yow certeyn;
I am a kyng, it sit me nought to lye."
"And I," quod sche, "am queen of faierie.
Hir answer schal sche have, I undertake;
Let us no mo wordes herof make.
Forsoth I wol no lenger yow contrarie."

Now let us turne agayn to Januarye,
That in this gardyn with this faire May
Syngeth, ful merier than the papinjay,
"Yow love I best, and schal, and other noon."
So long about the aleys is he goon,
Til he was come agaynes thilke pirie,
Wher as this Damyan sittith ful mirye
On heigh, among the freische leevys greene.
This freissche May, that is so bright and scheene,

Gan for to syke, and sayd, "Allas my syde!
Now, sir," quod sche, "for ought that may bityde,
I most han of the peres that I see,
Or I moot dye, so sore longith me
To eten of the smale peris greene;
Help for hir love that is of heven queen!
I telle yow wel a womman in my plyt
May have to fruyt so gret an appetyt
That sche may deyen, but sche it have."
"Allas!" quod he, "that I had heer a knave
That couthe climbe, allas! allas!" quod he,
"For I am blynd." "Ye, sire, no fors," quod sche;
"But wolde ye vouchesauf, for Goddes sake,
The piry inwith your armes for to take,
(For wel I woot that ye mystruste me)
Than schold I clymbe wel y-nough," quod sche,
"So I my foot mighte set upon your bak."
"Certes," quod he, "theron schal be no lak,
Might I yow helpe with myn herte blood."
He stoupith doun, and on his bak sche stood,
And caught hir by a twist, and up sche goth.
(Ladys, I pray yow that ye be not wroth,
I can not glose, I am a rude man:)
And sodeinly anoon this Damyan
Gan pullen up the smok, and in he throng.
And whan that Pluto saugh this grete wrong,
To January he yaf his sight agayn,
Ne was ther never man of thing so fayn;
But on his wyf his thought was evermo.
Up to the tree he kest his eyghen tuo,
And seigh that Damyan his wyf hadde dressid
In which maner it may not ben expressid,
But-if I wolde speke uncurteisly.
And up he yaf a roryng and a cry,
As doth the moder whan the child schal dye;
"Out! help! allas! harrow!" he gan to crie;
"O stronge lady stoure, what dos thow?"
And sche answerith: "Sire, what eylith yow?
Have paciens and resoun in your mynde,
I have yow holpen on bothe your eyen blynde.
Up peril of my soule, I schal not lyen,

As me was taught to hele with your yen,
Was nothing bet for to make yow see,
Than stroggle with a man upon a tree;
God woot, I dede it in ful good entente."
"Stroggle!" quod he, "ye, algat in it wente.
God yive yow bothe on schames deth to dyen!
He swyvede the; I saugh it with myn yen;
And elles be I honged by the hals."
"Than is," quod sche "my medicene fals.
For certeynly, if that ye mighten see,
Ye wolde not saye tho wordes unto me.
Ye han som glymsyng, and no parfyt sighte."
"I se," quod he, "as wel as ever I mighte.
(Thankid be God) with bothe myn yen tuo,
And by my trouth me thought he did the so."
"Ye mase, mase, goode sir," quod sche;
"This thank have I for I have maad yow see;
Allas!" quod sche, "that ever I was so kynde."
"Now, dame," quod he, "let al passe out of mynde;
Com doun, my leef, and if I have myssayd,
God help me so, as I am evel appayd.
But by my fader soule, I wende have seyn,
How that this Damyan hadde by the leyn
And that thy smok hadde layn upon thy breste."
"Ye, sire," quod sche, "ye may wene as yow leste;
But, sire, a man that wakith out of his slep,
He may not sodeynly wel take keep
Upon a thing, ne seen it parfytly,
Til that he be adawed verrayly.
Right so a man, that long hath blynd i-be,
He may not sodeynly so wel i-se,
First whan the sight is newe comen agayn,
As he that hath a day or tuo i-sayn.
Til that your sight y-stablid be a while,
Ther may ful many a sighte yow bigile.
Beth war, I pray yow, for, by heven king,
Ful many man wenith for to se a thing
And it is al another than it semeth;
He that mysconceyveth he mysdemeth."
And with that word sche leep doun fro the tre.
This January who is glad but he?

He kissith hir, and clippith hir ful ofte,
And on hir wombe he strokith hir ful softe;
And to his paleys hom he hath hir lad.
Now, goode men, I pray yow to be glad.
Thus endith her my tale of Januarye,
God blesse us, and his moder seinte Marie!

THE SQUYERES TALE

"Ey! Goddes mercy!" sayd our Hoste tho,
"Now such a wyf I pray God keep me fro.
Lo, suche sleightes and subtilitees
In wommen be; for ay as busy as bees
Be thay us seely men for to desceyve,
And from a soth ever a lie thay weyve.
And by this Marchaundes tale it proveth wel.
But doutéles, as trewe as eny steele
I have a wyf, though that she pore be;
But of hir tonge a labbyng shrewe is she;
And yit she hath an heep of vices mo.
No care of that; let alle such thinges go.
But wit ye what? in counseil be it seyd,
Me rewith sore I am unto hir tied;
And if I sholde reken every vice,
Which that she hath, i-wis I were too nyce;
And cause why; it shuld reported be
And told to hir by som of this companye,
(By whom it needith not for to declare,
Since wommen connen alle such chaffare);
And eek my witte suffisith nought therto
To tellen al; wherfor my tale is do."
"Sir Squier, com forth, if that your wille be,
And say us a tale of love, for certes ye
Connen theron as moche as ony man."
"Nay, sir," quoth he; "but I wil say as I can
With herty wil, for I wil not rebelle
Against your wille; a tale wil I telle,
Have me excused if that I speke amys;
My wil is good; and thereto my tale is this."

At Sarray, in the lond of Tartary,
Ther dwelled a kyng that warred agaynst Russy,
Thurgh which ther deyèd many a doughty man;
This nobil kyng was clepèd Cambynskan,
Which in his tyme was of so gret renoun,
That ther was nowher in no regioún
So excellent a lord in alle thing;
Him lakked nought that longèd to a kyng.
In the same secte of which that he was born,
He kept his faith to which that he was sworn;
And therto he was hardy, riche, and wys,
And just and piteous, and of good servyse,
Soth of his word, benign and honurable;
In his coráge as is the centre stable;
Yong, fresch, and strong, of fame désirous,
As eny bachiler of al his hous.
A fair person he was, and fortunát,
And kepte alway so wel his royal estat,
That ther was nowher such another man.
This noble kyng, this Tartre Cambynskan,
Hadde tuo sones by Elcheta his wyf,
Of which the eldest was clepèd Algarsyf,
That other was i-clepèd Camballo.
A doughter had this worthi king also,
That yongest was, and highte Canacee;
But for to telle yow al hir beautee,
It lieth not on my tonge, nor my connyng,
I dar nought undertake so high a thing;
Myn English eek is insufficient,
It moste be an oratour excellent
That knew his termes longyng to that art,
If he shold hir descrybe in eny part;
I am non such, I must speke as I can.
And so bifel it, that this Cambynskan
Hath twenty wynter born his dyademe;
As he was wont fro yer to yer, I deme,
He publisshèd throughout Sarray citee
The fest solemne of his nativitee,
The fifteene day of March, after the yeer.
Phebus the sonne ful joly was and cleer,
For he was nigh his exaltacioun
In Mars his face, and in his mansioun
In Aries, the colerik, the hot signe.

Ful lusty was the wether and benigne,
For which the foules in the sonne sheene,
What for the sesoun and for the yonge greene,
Ful lowde sang in there affeccioun:
They semed have gotten them proteccioun
Agenst the swerd of wynter kene and cold.
This Cambynskan, of which I have you told,
In royal vesture, sittyng on his deys
With dyadem, ful high in his paleys,
And held his test so solemne and so riche,
That in this worlde was there noon it like,
Of which if I shal tellen al the array,
Than wold it occupie a someres day:
And eek it needith nought for to devyse
Of every cours the ordre and the servyse.
I wol nat tellen of the straunge dishes,
Nor of the swannes, the bridles, and the fishes.
For in that lond, as tellen knightes olde,
Ther is som mete that is ful devntee holde,
That in this lond men reck of it but smal;
Ther is no man it may reporten al.
I wol not tarien you, for it is pryme,
And for it is no fruyt, but los of tyme,
Unto my purpos I wol have recours.
That so bifelle after the thridde cours,
Whil that the kyng sit thus in his array,
Herkyng his mynstrales that their thinges pleye
Byforn him atte boord deliciously,
In atte halle dore al sodeynly
Ther com a knight upon a steed of bras,
And in his hond a brod myrour of glas:
Upon his thomb he had of gold a tyng,
And by his side a naked swerd hangyng:
And up he rideth to the hye bord.
In al the halle was ther not spake a word,
For mervayl of this knight: him to byholde
Ful busily they watch bothe yong and olde.
This straunge knight that cam thus sodeynly,
Al armèd save his heed ful richely,
Saluted hath the kyng, and lordes alle
By ordre, as they seten in the halle,
With so high reverens and observaunce,
As wel in speche as in his countynaunce,

That Gaweyn with his olde curtesye,
Though he were come again out of fayrye,
Coude not amende it, no not with a word.
And after this, biforn the highe bord
He with a manly vois sayd his messáge,
After the forme he used in his langáge,
Withouten fault of sillabil or letter.
And for his tale shulde seme the better,
Accordaunt to his wordes was his look,
As clerkes use who techen by the book.
Al be it that I can nat given his style,
Nor can nat clymben over so high a style,
Yit say I this, this was his hole intente,
Thus moche amounteth al that ever he ment,
If it so be that I have it in mynde.

He sayd: "The kyng of Arraby and Ynde,
My liege lord, on this solemne day
Saluteth you as he best can or may;
He sendeth you, in honour of your feste,
By me, that redy am at al his heste,
This steede of bras, that esily and wel
Can in the space of one day naturel,
(This is to say, in four and twenty houres)
Wher-so you wil, in droughte or else in shoures,
Beren your body into every place,
To whiche your herte willeth for to pace,
Withouten hurt of you, thurgh foul and fair.
Or if you lust to flee as high in the air
As doth an egle, when him list to soar,
This same steede shal bere you evermore
Withouten harm, til ye be where you liste,
(Though that ye slepen on his bak or reste),
And torne agein, with twisting of a pyn.
He that it wrought knew many a fair engine;
He watchèd many a constellacioun,
Ere he hadde done this operacioun,
And knew ful many a seal and many a bond.

"This mirour eek, that I have in myn hond,
Hath such a mighte, that men may in it see
When ther shal falle eny adversitee
Unto your realm, or to yourself also,
And openly, who is your frend or fo.
And over al this, if eny lady bright

Hath set hir hert on eny maner wight,
If he be fals, she shal his tresoun see,
His newe love, and his subtilitee,
So openly, that ther shal nothing hyde.
Wherfor to fitte this lusty somer tyde
This mirour and this ryng, that ye may see,
He hath sent to my lady Canacee,
Your excellente doughter that is heere.

"The vertu of this ryng, if ye wil heere,
Is this, that who-so lust it for to were
Upon hir thomb, or in hir purs to bere,
Ther is on foul that fleeth under the sky,
That she shal not at ful perceyve his cry,
And know his menyng openly and pleyn,
And answer him in his langáge ageyn;
And every gras that groweth in the ground
She shal eek knowe, when it wil hele a wound,
Although it be never so deep and wyde.

"This naked swerd, that hangeth by my side,
Such vertu hath, that if a man ye smyte,
Thurghout his armur it wol kerve and byte,
Were it as thikke as is a braunchèd oke;
And what man is i-wounded with the stroke
Shal never be hool, til that you of youre grace
Strok him with this same blade in that same place
Where he is hurt; this is as moch to sey,
Ye muste with the platte swerd agayn
Stroke him upon the wound, and it wil close.
This is the verray soth withouten glose,
It failleth nought, whil it is in your hold."

And when this knight thus hadde his tale told,
He rid out of the halle, and doun he light.
His steede, which that shon as sonne bright,
Stant in the court as stille as eny stoon.
This knight is to his chambre lad anon,
And is unarmèd, and mete before him leyd.
These presents be ful carefully conveyd,
This is to sayn, the swerd and the myrrour,
And born anon unto the highe tour,
With certein officers ordeynd therfore;
And unto Canacee the ryng is bore
Solemnely, where she syt atte table;

But certeynly, withouten eny fable,
The hors of bras, that may nat be removed,
It stant, as it were to the ground i-glewed;
Ther may no man it dryve out of the place
For no engyn of pulley or windlas;
And cause why, for they know nought the craft,
And therfor in the place they have it laft,
Til that the knight hath taught them the manére
To moven him, as ye shul after heere.
Greet was the pres that swarmèd to and fro
To gapen on this hors that stondeth so;
For it so hihe was, and brod and long,
So wel proporcionèd for to be strong,
Right as it were a steed of Lumbardye;
Therto so horsly, and so quyk of eye,
As it a gentil Poyleys courser were;
For certes, fro his tayl unto his eere
Nature nor arte coude him nought amende
In no degree, as al the pepel wende.
But evermore their moste wonder was,
How that it coude go, and was of bras;
It was of fayry, as the peple semed.
Diverse peple diversly they demed;
As many hedes, so many wittes keen.
They murmurèd, as doth a swarm of been,
And made gesse after their fantasies,
Rehersyng of the olde poetries,
And seyden it was i-like the Pegasee,
The hors that hadde wynges for to flee;
Or elles it was the Grekissh hors Synon,
That broughte Troye to destruccioún,
As men may in the olde stories rede.
"Myn hert," quoth one, "is evermore in drede,
I trow som men of armes be therinne,
That shapen them this citee for to wynne;
It were right good that al such thing were knowe."
Another whispered to his felaw lowe,
And sayde: "He lieth, for it is rather lik
An ápparénce made by som magik,
As jugglours pleyen at the festes grete."
Of sondry thoughtes thus they jangle and trete,
As comun peple demen comunly

Of thinges that be made more subtily
Than they can in their lernyng comprehende,
They deemen gladly to the badder ende.
And som of them wondred on the mirroúr,
That born was up into the maister tour,
How men might in it suche thinges see.
Another answerd, and sayd, it might wel be
Al naturelly by composicioúns
Of angles, and of high reflexiouns;
And sayde that in Rome was such a one.
They speeke of Alocen and Vitilyon,
And Aristotle, that writen in their lyves
Of queynte myrrours and of perspectyves,
As knowen they that have their bokes herd.
And other folk have wondred on the swerd,
That wolde passe thorughout every thing;
And fel in speche of Thelophus the kyng,
And of Achilles for his queynte steel,
For he coude with hit bothe kille and hele,
Right in such wyse as men may with the swerd,
Of which right now ye have your-selven herd.
They speken of sondry hardyng of metál,
And speken of medicines therwithal,
And how and when it shulde harded be,
Which is unknowe however unto me.
Then speeken they of Canacées ryng,
And seyden alle, that such a wonder thing
Of craft of rynges herd they never noon,
Sauf that he, Moyses, and kyng Salamon
Hadden a name of connyng in such art.
Thus sey the peple, and drawen them apart.
But nontheles som seiden that it was
A wonder thing to make of ashes glas,
And yit are asshes nought y-like to glas,
But that they knowe so it made was;
Therfor cesseth their janglyng and their wonder.
And sore wondred som of cause of thonder,
On ebbe and flood, on gossomer, and on myst,
And on alle thing, til that the cause is wist,
Thus janglen they, and demen and devyse,
Til that the kyng gan fro his bord arise.
Phebus hath laft the angle merydyonal,
And yit ascendyng was the beste roial,

The gentil Lyoun, with his Aldiran.
Whan that this Tartre kyng, this Cambynskan,
Ros fro his bord, wher as he sat ful hye;
Biforn him goth ful lowde menstralcye,
Til he cam to his chambre of ornaments,
Where as ther were divers instruments
That is y-like an heven for to heere.
Now dauncen lusty Venus children deere;
For in the fissh their lady sat ful hy,
And loketh on them with a friendly eye.
This noble kyng is set upon his trone;
This straunge knight is brought to him ful sone,
And in the daunce he gan with Canacee.
Here is the revel and the jolytee,
That is not able a dul man to devyse;
He most have knowen love and his servise,
And be a festly man, as fresch as May,
That shulde you devyse such array.
Who coude telle you the forme of daunce
So uncouth, and so fresche countinaunce,
Such subtil lokyng of dissemblyngs,
For drede of jalous folk apperceyvynges?
No man but Launcelot, and he is deed.
Therfor I passe over al this lustyheed,
I say no more, but in this jolynesse
I lete them, til men to soper presse.
The styward bad them bring the spicerie
And eek the wyn, in al this melodye;
Thes usshers and thes squyers be agon,
The spices and the wyn is come anon;
They eet and drank, and when this had an ende,
Unto the temple, as resoun was, they wende;
The servise doon, they soupen al by day.
What needeth to rehersen their array?
Ech man wel knoweth, that a kynges feste
Hath plentee, to the lest and to the best,
And deyntees mo than be in my knowyng.
And after souper goth this noble kyng
To see this hors of bras, with al his route
Of lordes and of ladyes him aboute.
Swich wondryng was ther on this hors of bras,
That since the grete siege of Troye was,
When as men wondred on an hors also,

There was not such a wondryng y-knowe.
But fynally the kyng askèd the knight
The vertu of this courser, and the might,
And prayd him tellen of his governaúnce.
The hors anon gan for to trippe and daunce,
Whan that the knight leyd hand upon his rayne,
And sayde, " Sir, ther is nomore to sayne,
But whan you lust to ryden any where,
Ye muste trille a pyn that stant in his ere,
Which I shal tellen you bitwen us two,
Ye moste namen him to what place also,
Or what countree you luste for to ryde.
And when ye come where you wil abyde,
Bid him descende, and trille another pynne,
(For therin lieth the efect of the engin)
And he wil doun descend and do your wille,
And in that place he wol abyde still;
Though al the world had the contráry swore,
He shal nat thence be taken or i-bore.
Or if you lust to bid him quickly goon,
Trille this pyn, and he wil vanyssh anon
Out of the sight of every maner wight,
And come agein, be it by day or night,
When that you lust to clepen him agayn
In such a gyse, right as I shal yow sayn
Bitwixe you and me, and therfor so,
Byd when you lust, ther is nomor to do."
Enformèd when the kyng was of the knight,
And had conceyvèd in his wit aright
The maner and the forme of al this thing,
Ful glad and blith, this noble doughty kyng
Repeyryng to his revel, as biforn,
The bridel is unto the tour i-born,
And kept among his jewels leef and deere;
The hors vanysht, I know not the manére,
Out of their sight, ye get nomore of me;
But thus I lete him in his jolitee
This Cambinskan his lordes al festeynge,
Til atte laste the day bigan to sprynge.

Incipit Secunda Pars

The norice of digestioun, the sleep,
Gan to them wynk, and bad of him take keep,
That mirthe and labour wol have eche his reste;
And with a yawning mouth he them alle keste,
And sayd, that it was tyme to lye doun,
For blood was in his dominacioun:
"Cherish the blode, natúres frend," quoth he.
They thanken him gapyng, by two and thre,
And every wight gan drawe him to his rest,
As sleep them bad; they took it for the best.
Their dremes shal not now be told for me;
Ful were their heedes of fumositee,
That causeth dream, of which ther is no charge.
They slepen til that it was prime large,
The moste part, but it were Canacee;
She was ful mesurable, as wommen be.
For of hir fader hadde she take hir leve
To go to reste, soon after it was eve;
Her liste not awearied for to be,
Nor on the morwe uncomely for to see;
And kept hir firste sleep, and then awook.
For such a joye she in hire herte took,
Bothe of hir queynte ryng, and hir myrróur,
That twenty tyme chaungèd hir coloúr;
And in hir sleep, from that impressioún
Of hir myrroúr, she had a visioún.
Wherfor, ere that the sonne gan up glyde,
She clepèd upon her wommen beside,
And sayde, that she wolde for to ryse.
These olde wommen, that be gladly wise,
Thus to their maystresse, answered her anon,
And sayd, "Madame, whider wold ye gon
Thus erly? for the folk ben alle in reste."
"I wil," quoth she, "aryse, for me leste
No longer for to slepe, and walke aboute."
Her wommen clepeth others a gret route,
And up they risen togider, a ten or twelve.
Up ryseth fresshe Canacee hir selve,
As rody and bright, as is the yonge sonne
That in the ram is ten degrees i-ronne;

No higher was he, whan she redy was;
And forth she walkèd esily a pace,
Arayèd after the lusty sesoun hot
Lightly for to play, and walke on foote,
With fyve or six of al her compaignie;
And in a glade far in the park goth she.
The vapour, which that up the erthe shedde,
Maketh the sonne seme brood and red;
But natheles, it was so fair a sight,
That it made alle their hertes to be light,
What for the sesoun, what for the mornynge,
And for the foules that she herde synge.
For right anon she wiste what they ment
Right by their song, and knew al their entent.
The knotte, why that every tale is told,
If it be taryed til delighte be cold
Of them that have it listned over long,
The savour passeth by, the longer the song,
For fulsomnes of his prolixitee:
And by this same resoun thinketh me
I shulde to the knotte condescende,
And maken of hir walkynge sone an ende.
Amyddes a tree for-drye, as whit as chalk,
As Canacee was pleyyng in hir walk,
There sat a faukoun over hir heed ful hye,
That with a piteous vois bigan to crye,
That al the woode resownèd of hir cry,
I-beten had she hirself so piteously
With bothe hir wynges, til the reede blood
Ran al along the tree, wheron she stood.
And ever the same she cried and she shrieked,
And with hir bek hir selven so she pricked,
There is no tigre nor no cruel beste,
That dwelleth eyther in wood, or in foréste,
Wold not have wept, if wepen that he coude,
For sorrow of hir, she shrieked alway so lowde.
For ther was never yit no man on lyve,
If that he coude a faukoun wele discrive,
That herd of such another in fairnesse
As wel in plumage, as in gentillesse
Of shap, in al that might i-rekened be.
A faukoun peregryn then semède she
O distant lond; and ever as she stood,

She swownede now and now for lak of blood,
Til wel nigh is she fallen fro the tre.
This faire kynges doughter, Canacee,
That on hir fynger bar the queynte ryng,
Thurgh which she understood wel every thing
That eny foul may in his langage sayn,
And coude him answer in his tong agayn,
Hath understonde what this faukoun seyde,
And she wel nigh for pitee almost deyde.
And to the tree she goth ful hastily,
And on this faukoun loketh piteously,
And held hir lappe abrod, for wel she knew
The faukoun moste falle fro the bough,
When that it swownede next, for lak of blood.
A longe while to wayten thus she stood,
Til atte last she spak in this manére
Unto the hauk, as ye shal after heere.
" What is the cause, if it be for to telle,
That ye be in that furious peyne of helle? "
Quoth Canacee unto this hauk above;
" Is this for sorwe of deth, or elles love?
For as I trowe, these be causes tuo
That causen most a gentil herte wo.
Of other harm it needeth nought to speke,
For ye upon yourselven vengaunce wreke;
Which proveth wel, that either ire or drede
Must be the reson of your cruel dede,
Since that I see no other wight you chace.
For love of God, so do your selve grace.
Or what maye be your helpe? for west nor este
I never saw ere now no bryd or beste,
That ferde with him-self so piteously.
Ye sle me with your sorwe so verrily,
I have of you so gret compassioún.
For Goddes love, com fro the tree adoun;
And as I am a kynges doughter trewe,
If that I verrayly the cause knewe
Of your disese, if it lay in my might,
I wold amenden it, ere that it wer nyght,
So wisly help me grete God of al.
And herbes right enow I fynde shal,
To helen al your hurtes hastyly."
Then shrieked this faukoun more piteously

Than ever she did, and fil to ground anon,
And lay aswowne, deed as eny stoon,
Til Canacee hath in hir lap y-take,
Unto that tyme she gan of swowne awake;
And after that she reysèd up her heede,
Right in hir haukes langage thus she sayde.
" That pitee renneth sone in gentil herte
(Felyng his likenesse in anothers smerte)
Is provèd alday, as men may it see,
As wel by werk as by auctoritee;
For gentil herte kepeth gentillesse.
I see wel, that ye have on my distrésse
Compassioun, my faire Canacee,
Of verray wommanly benignitee,
That nature in your principles hath set.
Not in the hope that ye may somwhat gette,
But for to obeye unto your herte free,
And for to maken othere beware by me,
As by the whelp chastised is the lyon;
And for that cause and that conclusioún,
Whiles that I have a leisure and a space,
Myn harm I wil confessen ere I pace."
And while she ever of hir sorrow tolde,
That other wept, as she to water wolde,
Til that the faucoun bad her to be stille,
And with a sighe thus she told her fille.
" Where I was bred, (allas that same day!)
And fostred on a rock of marble gray
So tendrely, that nothing eylèd me,
I knewe not what was adversitee,
Til I coude flee ful high under the sky.
Tho dwelled a tercelet me faste by,
That semèd welle of alle gentillesse;
But he was ful of tresoun and falsnesse,
It was i-wrappèd under humble cheere,
And under hewe of trouthe in such manére,
Under plesaúnce, and under besy peyne,
That no wight wende that he coude feyne,
So deep in greyn he deyèd his colours.
Right as a serpent hides him under floúres
Til he may see his tyme for to byte:
Right so this god of loves ypocrite
Doth so his sermons and his óbservaúnce,

Under subtil coloúr and ácqueyntaúnce,
That sowneth like the gentilesse of love.
As in a tombe is al the faire above,
And under is the corps, whiche that ye wot;
Such was this ipocrite, bothe cold and hot,
And in this wise he servèd his entent,
That, sauf the Feend, noon wiste what he ment.
Til he so long had wepèd and compleynèd,
And many a yeer his service to me feynèd,
Til that myn hert, too piteous and too nyce,
Al innocent of his cruel malíce,
Al fereful of his deth, as thoughte me,
Upon his othes and his securitee,
Graunted him love, on this condicioún,
That evermo myn honour and my renoun
Were savèd, both open and secretly;
This is to sayn, that, afte his love to me,
I gaf him al myn hert and al my thought,
(Got wot, and he, that else I gaf him nought)
And took his hert in chaunge of myn for ay,
But soth is sayd, it hath been many a day,
A true wight and a theef thenketh nought one.
And when he saw the thyng so far i-goon,
That I had graunted him fully my love,
In such a wyse as I have sayd above,
And geven him my trewe hert as free
As he swor that he gaf his herte to me,
Anon this tigre, ful of doublenesse,
Fil on his knees with gret dévoutenésse,
With so high reverence, as by his chere,
So lyk a gentil lover in manére,
So ravyshèd, as it semède, for joye,
That never Jason, ne Parys of Troye,
Jason? no, certes, ne non other man,
Since Lameth was, that first of al bygan
To loven two, as writen folk bifore,
Nor never since the firste man was bore,
Ne coude man by twenty thousand part
Contrefete the sophism of his art;
Nor worthy were to unbokel his galoshe,
When doublenes of feynyng shold approche,
Ne so coude thank a wight, as he did me.
His maner was an heven for to see

To eny womman, were she never so wys;
So peynteth he and combeth poynt devys,
As wel his wordes, as his continaunce.
And I so loved him for his óbeisaúnce,
And for the trouthe I demèd in his herte,
That if so were that eny thing him smerte,
Al were it never so litel, and I it wist,
Me thought I felte deth at myn hert twist.
And shortly, so ferforth this thing is went,
That my wil was his willes instrument;
This is to say, my wille obeied his wille
In alle thing, as fer as resoun fille,
Kepyng the boundes of my honour ever;
Nor never had I thing so leef, ne lever,
As him, God wot, nor never shal nomo.
This laste lenger than a yeer or two,
That I supposèd of him nought but good.
But fynally, atte laste thus it stood,
That fortune wolde that he moste go
Out of the place in which that I was tho.
Whether me was wo, it is no questioun;
I can nat make of it descripcioun.
For one thing dare I telle boldely,
I know what is the peyne of deth, therby,
Which harm I felt, for he ne mighte byleve.
So on a day of me he took his leve,
So sorrowful eek, that I wened verryly,
That he had felèd as moche sorrow as I,
When that I herd him speke, and saw his hewe.
But nonetheles, I thought he was so trewe,
And eek that he shuld soon repeire ageyn
Withinne a litel while, soth to seyn,
And resoun wold eek that he moste go
For his honour, as oft it happeth so.
Then I made vertu of necessitee,
And took it wel, since that it moste be.
As I best might, I hid from him my sorrow,
And took him by the hand, seint Johan to
borrow,
And sayde thus: "Lo, I am youres al,
Be such as I have been to you and shal."
What he answerd, it needeth nat to reherse:
Who can say bet than he, who can do werse?

When he hath al wel sayd, then hath he don.
Therfor bihoveth him a ful long spoon,
That shal ete with a feend; thus herd I say.
So atte last he moste forth his way.
And forth he fleeth, til he cam where him liste.
When it cam him to purpos for to reste,
I trow he hadde that same text in mynde,
That alle thing repeyryng to his kynde
Gladeth himself: thus sey men, as I gesse;
Men loven naturally newefangilnesse,
As birddes do, that men in cages feed.
For though thou night and day take of them heede,
And straw their cage faire and soft as silk,
And geve hem sugre, hony, breed, and mylk,
Yet right anon when that his dore is uppe,
He with his feet wil sporne doun his cuppe,
And to the woode he wil, and wormes ete;
So newefangled be thei in their mete,
And loven novelties of their owne kinde;
No gentilesse of blood may them bynde.
So ferde this tercelet, allas the day!
Though he were gentil born, and fresshe, and gay,
And goodly for to see, and humble, and free,
He saw upon a tyme a kyte flee,
And sodeinly he loved thys kyte so,
That al his love is clene fro me go;
And hath his trouthe falsèd in this wyse.
Thus hathe the kite my love in hire servíse,
And I am lost withoute remedye."
And with that word this faukon gan to crye,
And swounéd eft on Canacées arm.
Gret was the sorwe for the haukes harm,
That Canacee and alle hire wommen made;
They knew not how they mighte the fawkon glade.
But Canacee her bereth in her lappe,
And softely in plastres gan her wrappe,
Wher as she with her beek hath hurt her selve.
Now Canacee bigan the herbes delve
Out of the grounde, and maken salves newe
Of herbes precious and fyn of hewe,

To hele the hauk; and thus fro day to nyght
She doth her besynesse, and al her myght.
And made a cage by hir beddes-heed,
And it with blewe veluettes coverèd,
In signe of trouthe that is in wommen seene;
And al withoute the cage is peynted greene,
In which were peynted alle these false fowles,
As be these finches, tercelettes, and owles;
And magpies, on them for to crye and chyde,
Right for despyte were peynted them bysyde.
Thus leve I Canacee her hawk keeping.
I wil nomore as nowe speke of hir ryng,
Til it come eft to purpos for to seyn,
How that this faukon gat her love ageyn
Repentaunt, as the storie telleth us,
By mediacioun of Camballus
The kinges sone, of which that I you tolde;
But henceforth I wol my proces holde
To speke of áventúres, and of batailles,
That yet was never herde so gret mervailles.
First wil I telle you of Kambynskan,
That in his tyme many a cite wan;
And after wol I speke of Algarsif,
How that he wan Theodora to his wyf.
For which ful ofte in grete peril he was,
Hadde he not ben holpen by the hors of bras.
And after wil I speken of Camballo,
That faught in listes with the bretheren two
For Canacee, ere that he might hir wynne,
And where I lefte I wil ageyn bygynne.
Apollo whirleth up his car so hye
Til that the God Mercurius hous the slye

* * * * * *

(*This tale was never finished.*)

THE FRANKELEYNES TALE

" In faith, Squiér, thou hast thee wel y-quit
And gentilly, I praise wel thy wit,"
Quoth the Frankeleyn, " considering thin youthe,
So felingly thou spekest, sir, in truth,
As to my thought, none other that is here,
In eloquence shal ever be thy pere,
If that thou live; God geve thee goode chaunce,
And in vertue send thee continuance,
For thy speking I love it wel," quoth he.
" I have a son, and by the Trinitee
I rather wold than twenty pound worth land,
Though it right now were fallen in myn hand,
He were a man of suche discretion,
As that ye be; fie on possession,
Unless a man be vertuous withal
I have my sone snubbèd, and yet shal,
For he to vertue listeth not to entende,
But for to play at dice, and to dispende,
And lese al that he hath, is his uságe;
And he had rather talken with a page,
Than to commune with any gentil wight,
When he might lernen gentillesse aright."
" Straw for your gentillesse!" quoth our hoste.
" What? Frankeleyn, in faith, sir, wel thou knowest,
That eche of you must tellen at the lest
A tale or two, or breken his behest."
" That know I wel, sir," quoth the Frankeleyn,
" I pray you have me not in your disdein,
Though I to this man spoke a word or two."
" Telle on thy tale, withouten wordes mo."
" Gladly, sir hoste," quoth he, " I wil obeye
Unto your wille; now herken what I seye;
I wil you not contrarien in no wise,
As fer as that my wittes may suffice.
I pray to God that it may plesen you,
Than wot I wel that it is good y-now."

These olde gentile Britouns in their dayes

Of diverse áventures maden layes,
Al rymèd in their firste Britoun tonge;
Whiche layes with their instruments they songe,
Or elsę redden them for their plesaunce,
And one of them have I in rémembraunce,
Which I shal seye with as goode wille as I can,
But, sirs, bycause I am a common man,
At my begynnyng first I you beseche
Have me excusèd of my rude speche,
I lernèd never rhetorick certayn;
That thing I speke, it wil be bare and playn;
I slepte never on the mount of Pernaso,
Ne lernèd never Tullius, nor Cicero.
Colours of rhetorick non are in my hed,
But suche coloures as growen in the mede,
Or elsę suche as men dye with or peynte;
Colours of rethorik be to me too quaint;
My spyrit feleth nought of suche matére.
But if ye liste my talę shal ye now here.

Ther was a knight, that loved and foughte amain
In Armoryke, that clepèd is Britéyne,
To serve a lady in his beste wise;
And many a labour, and many a grete emprise
He for his lady wrought, ere she was wonne;
For she was one the fairest under sonne,
And eke therto came of so high kindred,
That scarce durst this knight for verie drede
Telle her his woe, his peyne, and his distresse.
But at the laste she for his worthinesse,
And chiefly for his meke obéissance,
Hath suche a pitee felt for his penaunce,
That privily she felle into accord
To take him for her housbonde, and her lord,
(Of suche lordshipe as men have over their wives);
And, for to lede the more in blisse their lyves,
Of his free wille he swor it as a knight,
That never in his wille by day or night
Wolde he upon him take the mastery
Against her wille, nor guard her jealously,
But her obey, and follow her wille in al,
As eny lover to his lady shal;

Save that the name of sovereynetee
That wolde he have because of his degree.
She thanketh him, and with ful grete humblesse
She sayde; "Sir, since of your gentilnesse
Ye profre me to have so large a reyne,
May never God, I pray, betwixe us tweyne,
For guilt of mine, bring eyther war or stryf.
Sir, I wil be your humble trewe wife,
Have here my trothe, til that myn herte fail."
Thus be they bothe in quiete and in wele.
For one thing, masters, safly dare I saye,
That frendes al each other must obeye,
If they wille longe holde companye
Love wil nought be constreined by mastery.
When mastery cometh, the god of love anon
Beteth his wynges, and fare wel, he is gon.
Love is a thing, as any spirit, free.
Wommen of nature loven libertée,
And nought to be constreinèd as a thral;
And so do men, if I the sooth say shal.
Loke who that is most pacient in love,
He is ful certes others al above.
An high vertúe is Patience, certeyn,
For it vanquíssheth, as these clerkes seyn,
Thynges that rigour never can atteine.
For every word men may nought chyde or pleyne.
Lern then to suffre, or elles, it must be so,
Ye shall it lernen whether ye wil or no.
For in this worlde certeyn no wight ther is,
That he ne doth or saith som tyme amiss.
Sickness or wrath or constellacioun,
Wyn, woe, or changynge of complexioun,
Causeth ful often to do amiss or speak.
For every wrong men cannot vengeance take;
Sometimes and often must be temperaunce
To every wight that loveth governance.
Therefore this knight his wife for to plese
Hath promised she shal live in rest and ese;
And sche to him ful wisely gan to swere,
That never shulde ther be defaulte in her.
Here may men see an humble wyse accord;
Thus that she taken her servaunt and her lorde,
Servaunt in love, and lord in mariáge.

Then was he bothe in lordshipe and serváge.
Serváge? Not so. In lordshipe al above,
Since that he hath his lady and his love;
His lady certes, and his wyf also,
The lawe of love alloweth bothe two.
And when he was in this prosperitee,
Home with his wyf he goeth to his countree,
Nought far fro Penmark where his dwellyng was,
And ther he lyveth in blisse and in solás.
Who coude telle, but he hadde wedded be,
The joy, the ese, and the prosperitee,
That is bitwixe an housebond and his wyf?
A yeer and more lasteth this blissful life,
Til that this knight, of which I speke thus,
That of kindred was cleped Arveragus,
Thought for to go and dwelle a yeer or tweyne
In Engelond, that cleped eke was Bretáyne,
To seek in armes worshipe and honoúr,
For all his wille was sette in such laboúr;
And dwelleth there two year; the boke saith thus.
Now wil I stynte of this Arviragus,
And speken I wil of Dorygen his wyf,
That loveth her husbonde as her hertes lyf.
And for his absens wepeth she and grieveth,
As doth a noble wyf when that she loveth;
She mourneth, waketh, wayleth, fasteth, pleyneth;
Desire of his presénce hire so constreyneth,
That al this wyde world she sette at nought.
Her frendes, which that knewe her hevy thought,
Confórted her in al that ever they may;
They preche to her, thay telle her night and day,
That without cause she sleeth her self alas
And every comfort possible in this case
They do to her, with all their busyness,
And all to make hire stay her hevynesse.
By length of tyme ye know wel, every one,
Men may so longe graven in the stone,
Til some figúre therinne imprentyd be;
So longe have they confórted her, that she
Receyvèd hath, by hope and by resoún,
The impryntynge of their consollacioún.

Through which her grete sorrow gan aswage;
She may nought alway lyve in suche rage.
And eke Arviragus, in al this care,
Hath sent his lettres home of his wel-fare,
And that he wolde swiftly come ayayn,
Or else this sorrow hadde her herte slayn.
Her frendes sawe her grief begin to slake,
And preyèd her on knees, for Goddes sake,
To come and sport her in their companye;
Away to dryve her darke fantasye;
And fynally she graunted that requeste,
For wel she saw that it was for the best.
Now stood her castel faste by the see,
And often with here freendes walkèd she,
Her to disporte upon the banke on high,
Wher many shippes and barges saylen by
Takyng their cours, wher as they liste to go.
But yet was there a parcelle of hir woe,
For to her self ful often, seyde she,
"Is ther no shipp, so many that I see,
Wil brynge back my lord? then wolde myn herte
Al cease to feel this bitter peynes smerte."
Another tyme ther wolde she sitte and think,
And caste her eyen dounward from the brynk;
But when she saw the grisly rockes blak,
For verray fear so wolde here herte quake.
That on her feet she mighte nought hir sustaine.
Thenne wolde she sitte adoun upon the grene,
And piteously into the see byholde,
And say right thus, with sorowful sighes cold.
"Eterne God, that through thy providence
Ledest the world by certein governaunce,
In ydelnesse, as men say ye nothinge make.
But, Lord, these grisly feendly rockes blak,
That semen rather a foul confusioún
Of werk, than any fayr creacioún
Of suche a parfyt God so strong and stable,
Why have ye wrought this werk unresonáble?
For by this werke, south, north, est, and west,
Ther is y-fostred neither man nor beast;
It doth no good, to my witt, but annoyeth.
See ye not, Lorde, how mankynde it destroyeth?

An hundred thousand bodyes of mankynde
Have rockes slayn, forgotten out of mynde;
Which mankynde is of al thy werk the best
That Thou hast made it chief of al the rest,
Then semèd it, ye hadde gret charitee
Toward mankynde; but how then may it be,
That ye suche meanes take it to distroyen?
Whiche meanes do no good, but ever annoyen.
I wot wel, clerkes wil say it as they list,
By arguments, that al is for the beste,
Though I cannot the causes truly knowe;
But the goode God that made the wynde to blowe,
Kepe safe my lord, this is mine orisoún;
To clerkes leve I disputacioún;
But wolde God, that al the rockes blak
Were sonken into helle for his sake
These rockes slay myn herte for verray feere."
Thus wolde she sayn with many a piteous teere.
Her frendes sawe that it was no dispórt
To roamen by the see, but díscomfórt,
And shaped them for to pleyen somwhere else.
They led her by the ryveres and by wells,
And in al other places delitábles;
They daunce and playe at chesse and eke at tables.
So on a day, right in the morning tyde,
Unto a gardyne that was there besyde,
In which that thay hadde made their ordinance
Of victual, and of other purveyance,
They go and pleyen al the longe day;
And this was on the sixte morn of May,
Which May hadde peynted with his softe showers
This gardyn ful of leves and of floures:
And crafte of mannes hande so curiously
Arayèd hath this gardyn cunningly,
That never was ther gardyn of such prys,
Save that it were the verrey Paradys.
The odure of floures and the fresshe sight,
Wolde have made eny pensyf herte light
That ever was born, save that a gret siknesse
Or too gret sorrow held it in distresse,

And after dyner they began to daunce,
So ful it was of beautee and plesaunce,
And synge also, but Dorigen sang alone.
She made alwey her cómpleynt and hire mone,
For that she saw not in the daunce move,
The one that was her housbond, and her love;
But none the less she muste a tyme abyde,
And with good hope she let her sorrow glyde.
Upon this daunce, amonges other men,
Dauncèd a squier biforen Dorigen,
That fressher was and jolyer of array,
As I have heard, than is the monthe of May.
He syngeth and daunceth passyng any man,
That is or hath been since this world bygan;
Therwith he was, if men shulde him discryve,
One of the beste farynge men alive,
Yong, strong, ryht vertuous and riche, and wys,
And wel biloved, and holden in grete price.
And shortly, if the sooth I tellen shal,
Unwytyng of this Dorigen at al,
This lusty squyer, servaunt to Venús,
Which that y-clepéd was Aurelius,
Had loved her best of eny créatúre
Tuo yeer and more, as was his áventúre;
But never durste he telle her of his grevaunce,
Withoute cuppe he drank al his penaúnce.
He was dispeyrèd, nothing durst he seye,
Save in his talk somwhat wolde he display
His woe, as in a general cómpleynýng;
He sayde, he loved and was biloved nothing.
Of suche mater of love he made his layes,
Songes and compleigntes, dirges and roundelays;
How that he durste nought his sorrow telle,
That languissheth as fire slowe in helle;
And die he seyde he muste, as did Echo
For Narcissus, that durste nought telle her woe.
But in no other maner than I seye
He durste not to her his woe betreye,
Save paraventure some tyme at the daunce,
When yong folk kepen al their óbservaúnce
It may wel be he lokèd on her face
In such a wise, as one that asketh grace,
But nothing wiste she of his entent.

And yet it happèd, ere they thence are went,
Bycause that he was her neyghebóure,
And was a man of worshipe and honoúr,
And she hadde knowen him long in tyms yore,
They felle in speche, and ofte more and more
Unto his purpose drew Aurelius;
And when he saw his tyme, he sayde thus.
"Madame," quoth he, "by God, that this world made,
So that I wist it mighte your herte glad,
I wolde that day, that your Arviragus
Went on the see, that I Aurelius
Had went that I shulde never have come again;
For wel I wot my servise is in vayn,
My guerdon is but bersting of myn herte.
Madame, have pitee upon my peynes smerte,
For as with a sword ye may me slay or saven.
Here at youre foot God wold that I were graven
I have now no more leisure for to seye;
Have mercy on me, swete, or let me die."
She gan to loke upon Aurelius;
"Is this youre wille," quoth she, "and say ye thus?
Never," quoth she, "wist I what ye have mente,
But now, Aurely, I knowe youre entente.
By the goode God, that gaf me soule and lyf,
Never shal I be found untrewe wif
In word or werk; as fer as I have wit,
I wole be his to whom that I am knyt."
But after that in pley thus seyde she:
"Take this for fynal answer as for me.
Aurelye," quoth she, "by high God above,
Yet wil I graunte you to be my love,
Since I you see so piteously compleyne,
Looke on the daye when al along Bretayne
Ye shal remoove the rockes stone by stone,
That roome ther be for shippes and boats to gon;
I say, when ye have made these costes so clene
Of rockes, that ther is no stone y-sene,
Than wil I love you best of any man,
Have here my trothe, in al that ever I can."
"Is ther none other grace in you?" quoth he.
"No, by that Lord," quoth she, "that made me,

For wel I wot that that shal never betyde.
Let such folýe out of youre herte glyde.
What glory shulde a man have in his life,
That he shulde love another mannes wyf? "
Woe was Aurely when that he this herde,
And with a sorrowful herte he thus answérde.
" Madame," quoth he, " this were impossíble.
Then must I deye a sodeyn deth orríble."
And with that word he tornèd him anon.
Then came her other frendes many a one,
And in the alleyes roamèd up and doun,
And nothing wiste of this conclusioún,
But sodeinly began to revel newe,
Til that the brighte sonne had lost his hewe,
For the hórizón had lost the sunnes light,
(This is as moche to say that it was night);
And home they go in joye and in solás;
Save only wrecched Aurelius, allas.
He to his hous is gon with sorrowful hert.
He seith, he may not from his deth depart.
He thinketh that he felith his herte cold,
Up to the hevene his handes gan he hold,
And on his kneës bare he sette him doun,
And in his ravynge sayd his orisoún.
For verray woe out of his witte he brake,
He knew nought what he seyde, but thus he spake;
With piteous herte hath he his pleynt bygunne
Unto the goddes and first unto the sonne.
He sayde, " Apollo, God and governoúr
Of every plaunte, of herbe, tree, and flour,
That gevest by thy declinacioun
To each of them his tyme and his sesoún,
When that thy place in heven is low or high;
Lord Phebus, cast thin merciable eye
On wrecched Aúrelý, that am forlorn.
Lo, lord, my lady hath my deth y-sworne
Withouten gilt; let thy benignitee
Upon my dedly herte have sum pitee.
For wel I wot, lord Phebus, if ye liste,
Ye may be helpe, save my lady, beste.
Now vouchesafe, that I may you devyse
How that I may be helped and in what wyse.

Your blisful sister, Lúcina the shene,
That of the see is chief goddésse and queene;—
Though Néptunús have deity in the see,
Yit emperesse aboven him is she;
Ye knowen wel, lord, right as her desire
Is to be lighted by the sunnes fire,
For which she followeth you ful busily,
Right so the see desireth naturelly
To folwen her, as she that is goddésse
Bothe in the see and ryveres more and lesse.
Wherefore lord Phebus, this is myn request,
Do this myrácle, or myn herte wil brest;
That thou next at this apposicioun,
Whiche in the signe shal be of the Lion,
Do pray to her so grete a flood to brynge
That five fathome at least it overspringe
The hyeste rocke in Armorik Britayne,
And lete this flod endure yeres twayne;
Then certes to my lady may I saye,
Grant me your grace, the rockes be awaye,
Lord Phebus, do this miracle for me,
Pray her she go no faster cours than ye;
I say thus, pray your sister that she go
No faster cours than ye these yeres two;
Then shal she be ever at the fulle alway
And springe-flood lasten bothe night and day.
And if she vouchesafe not in such manér
To graunte me my lady soverein dere,
Preye her to synken every rocke adoun
Into her owne darke regioún
Under the grounde, where Pluto duelleth inne,
Or nevermore shal I my lady wynne.
Thy temple in Delphos wil I barefoot seek;
Lord Phebus, see the teeres on my cheek;
And of my peyne have some compassioún."
And with that word in swoone he felle adoun,
And longe tyme he lieth in a traunce.
His brother, which that knew of his penaúnce,
Up caught him, and to bedde he hath him broughte.
Despayring in his turment and his thought,
Lo I this woeful créatúre let lye,
Nought is to me whether he lyve or dye.

Arveragus with health and gret honoúr
(As he that was of chyvalry the flour)
Is comen home, and other worthy men.
O, blisful art thou now, thou Dorigen,
That hast thy lusty housbonde in thin armes.
The fresshe knight, the worthy man of armes,
That loveth thee, as his own hertes lyf;
Nothing thought he to be imaginatyff,
If any wight hadde spoke, whilst he was oute,
To her of love; he made ther-of no doute;
He nought attendeth to no suche matére,
But daunceth, justith, maketh goode cheere.
And thus in joye and blisse I let him dwelle,
And of the swete Aurelyus wol I telle.
In langure and in furious turments thus
Tuo yer and more lay wrecched Aurelius,
Ere any foot on erthe he mighte gon;
No comfort in this tyme found he non,
Save in his brother, which that was a clerk.
He knew of al this wo and al this werk;
For to no other créatúre certeyn
Of this matére durste he no worde seyn;
Under his brest he bar it more secree
Than ever dide Pamphilius for Galathee.
His brest was hole without for to be sene,
But in his herte ay was the arrow kene;
And wel ye knowen of an inward sore
In surgerie ful perilous is the cure,
Save man might touche the arwe or come therby.
His brother wepeth and wayleth privyly,
Til atte last him fel in rémembraúnce,
That whiles he was at Orlyaunce in Fraunce,
As yonge clerkes, that be desirous
To reden artes that be curious,
Seken in every corner low and hy
Particuler sciénces to studie,
He him remembreth, that upon a chance,
A studie book he saw at Orlyaúnce
Of magique naturel, whiche his felawe,
(That was that tyme a bachiler of lawe),
Though he were there to lerne of lawe the craft,
Had privily upon his desk y-left;
This book spak moche of operaciouns

Touchynge the eight and twenty mancioúns
That longen to the moon, and suche folýe
As in oure dayes is nought worth a flye;
For holy chirche saith, in our byleeve,
Suffre no vaine illusioun you to greeve.
And whan this boke was in rémembraúnce,
Anon for joye his herte gan to daunce,
And to him selve he sayde pryvely;
" My brother shal be curèd hastely;
For I am sure that ther be sciénces,
By whiche men maken dyverse ápparénces,
Like to the subtile juggelours when they play
For ofte at festes have I herd it say,
That juggelours, withinne an halle large,
Have made in comen water and a barge,
And in the halle rowen up and doun.
Som tyme hath semèd come a grym leoun,
Some tyme a castel al of lym and ston,
And whan they would it vanisshèd anon;
Thus semèd it to every mannes sight.
Now then conclude I thus, if that I might
At Orleaunce som olde felaw finde,
That hadde the moones mancioúns in mynde,
Or othere magik naturel above,
He sholde wel make my brother have his love.
For with an apparens a clerk may make
To mannes sight, that alle the rokkes blake
Of Britaigne were y-vanisshed every one,
And shippes by the brinke might come and goon,
And in such forme endure a yeer or tuo
Then were my brother curèd of his wo,
Then must she needes do al she promised
Or else he shal hir shamen at the leste."
What shulde I make a lenger tale of this?
Unto his brothers bedde comen he is,
And such comfórt he gaf him, for to gon
To Orlyaunce, that he up starte anon,
And on his way he hastely doth fare,
In hope to be releasèd of his care.
When thay were come almost to that citee,
As if it were a forlong tuo or thre,
A yong clerk romyng by himself they mette,
Which that in Latyn thriftily them grette.

And after that he sayde a wonder thing;
"I know," quoth he, "the cause of youre comyng."
And ere they forther any foote went,
He told them alle that was in there entent.
(This Brytoun clerk him askèd to be told,
Of felaws that he knew in dayes olde;
And he him answerde that they dede were,
For which he wep ful ofte many a tere.)
Doun of his hors Aurelius light anon,
And forth with this magicien is he gon
Home to his hous, and made them wel at ese;
They lacked no vitayle that a man might plese.
So wel arayed a hous as that was there,
Aurelius in his lyfe saw never.
He shewèd him, ere he went to sopére,
Forestes, parkes ful of wilde deere.
And how the faukons have the heron slayne,
Then saw he knightes justen in a playne,
And after this he dide him such plesaúnce,
That he him shewed his lady in a daunce,
In which himself he dauncèd, as he thouht.
And when this mayster, that this magique wrought,
Saw it was tyme he clapped his hondes two,
And fare-wel! the revel is no mo.
And yit removed they never out of this hous,
Whiles they sawe this sight so merveylous;
But in his study, where his bookes be,
They saten stille, and no wight but they three.
To him his mayster called then a squiére,
And seyde him thus "Is redy oure sopére?
Almost an hour it is, I undertake,
Since I you bad oure souper for to make,
Whan that this worthy men wenten with me
Into my study, where my bokes be."
"Sir," quoth this squyer, "when it lyketh you,
It is al redy, if ye wol eten now."
"Go we then soupe," quoth he, "and it is beste,
You lover folk som tyme must have reste."
At after souper felle they in tretee
What somme shulde this maystres guerdon be,
To moven all the rokkes of Brytaigne,

And eek fro Gerounay to the mouth of Sayne.
He made it hard, and swore, so God him save,
Lasse than a thousand pound he wolde nought have,
And from that same somme he wolde not goon.
Aurilius with blisful hert anon
Him answerde thus; "Fy on a thousand pound!
This wyde world, which that men say is round,
I wold it give, if I were lord of it.
This bargeyn is now made, for we be knyt;
Ye shal be payèd trewly by my trothe.
But keep us not by negligence or slouthe,
An houre lenger than the morwe morn."
"Nay," quod the clerk, "I have my faith y-sworn."
To bed is gon Aurilius when he leste,
And wel ny al the night he had his reste,
What with his labour, and his hope of blisse,
His woful hert of penaunce had release.
Upon the morwe, when that it was day,
To Breteign take thei the righte way,
Aurilius, and this magicien bisyde,
And be descendid where thay wil abyde;
And this was, as these bookes me remembre,
The colde frosty seisoun of Decembre.
Phebus wax old, and sanke low adoun,
Though in his hote declinacioún
He shon as burnèd gold, with stremes bright;
But now in Capricorn adoun he light,
Wher as he shon ful pale; I dar wel sayn
The bitter frostes with the sleet and rayn
Destroyèd have the grene in every yerd.
Janus sit by the fyr with double beard,
And drynketh from his bugle horn the wyn;
Biforn him is the braun of tuskèd swyn,
And "Nowell" crieth every lusty man.
Aurilius, in al that ever he can,
Doth to his maister chier and reverence,
And peyneth him to do his diligence
To bringen him out of his peynes smerte,
Or with a swerd he wolde slytte his herte.
This subtil clerk such ruth had of his man,
That night and day he werketh al he can,

To wayte a tyme for his conclusioun;
This is to say, to make illusioun,
By such an apparence of jogelrie,
(I can no termes of astrologie)
That she and every wight shold think and saye,
That from Breteygn the rokkes were awaye,
Or else they sonken were under the grounde.
So atte last he hath a tyme i-founde
To make his trickes and his wrecchednesse
Of such a supersticious cursednesse.
His tables Tollitanes forth he broughte
Ful wel corrected, nowhere lakked nought,
Neither his collect, ne his single yeeres,
Neither his rootes, nor his other geeres,
As be his centris, and his argumentis,
And his proporcienels convenientis
For their equaciouns in every thing.
And by his eighte speere in his worchíng,
He knew ful wel how fer Allnath was shove
Fro the heed of fixèd Aries above,
That in the ninthe speere considred is.
Ful subtilly he calculateth this.
Whan he had founde his firste mansioún,
He knew the remnaunt by proporcioun;
And knew the arisyng of this moone wel,
And in whos face in heaven, and every del;
And knew ful wel the moones mansioún
According to his operacioún;
And knew also his other óbservánces,
For suche illusions and suche mischances,
As hethen folk usèd in thilke dayes.
For which no longer makèd he delayes,
But through his magic, for a week or tweye,
It semèd that the rokkes were away.
Aurilius, who yet dispayrèd is
If he shal have his love or fare amiss,
Awayteth night and day on this mirácle;
And when he knew that there was no obstácle,
That vanished were these rokkes every one,
Doun to his maistres feet he fel anon,
And sayd; "I wrecched woful Aurilius,
Thanke you, lord, and my lady Venus,
That me have helpèd fro my cares colde."

And to the temple his way forth he hath holde,
Where well he knew he shold his lady see.
And when he saw his tyme, anon right he
With dredful hert and with ful humble cheere
Saluted hath his owne lady deere.
"My soverayn lady," quoth this woful man,
"Whom I most drede, and love, as I best can,
And would full loth in al this world displese,
Were it not that I for you have such disese,
That I most deye here at youre foot anon,
Nought wold I tellen of my woe and moan,
But certes most I dye or else complain;
Ye sleen me innocent for verrey peyne.
But of my deth though that ye have no ruth,
Consider now, ere that ye breke your trothe;
Repente you for thilke God above,
Or else me slay, bycause that I you love.
For, wel ye know, madame, your promise;
Nat that I claim now eny thing for this
Of you, my soverayn lady, but youre grace;
But in a gardyn yonder, at such a place,
Ye wot right wel what ye have promised me,
And in myn hand your trothe plighted ye,
To love me best; God wot ye sayde so,
Al be that I unworthy am therto;
Madame, I speke it for the honoúr of you,
More than to save myn hertes lif right now
I have done so as ye comaunded me,
And if ye doubte me, ye may go see.
Do as you list, have youre byheste in mynde,
For quyk or deed, right there ye shal me fynde;
In you it lieth to make me lyve or deye?
But wel I wot the rokkes be away."
He taketh his leve, and she astonèd stood;
In alle her face was not one drop of blood;
She never thought to have been in such a trappe.
"Allas!" quoth she, "that ever this shulde happe.
For thought I never by possibility
That such a monstre or merveyl mighte be;
It is agaynst the process of natúre."
And home she goth a sorwful créatúre,
For very fere scarcely may she go.

She wepeth, wayleth al a day or two,
And swooneth, that it ruthe was to see;
But why it was, to no wight tolde she,
For out of toune was gon Arviragus.
But to her self she spak, and sayde thus,
With face pale, and with ful sorwful chere,
In hir compleint, as ye shal after here.
"Allas!" quoth she, "on thee, Fortúne, I pleyne,
That unaware hast wrapped me in thy cheyne,
From which to escape, know I no socoúr,
Save only deth, or else dishonoúr;
One of these two bihoveth me to choose,
But none the less, yet have I rather lose
My lif, than of my body to have shame,
Or knowe my-selve fals, or lose my name;
And with my deth I may be quit, I wis.
Hath ther not many a noble wyf, ere this,
And many a mayden, slayn hir-self, allas!
Rather than with her body do trespás?
Yes certeynly; lo, stories bere witnés.
When thirty tyraunts ful of cursedness
Hadde slayn Phidon in Athenes at the feste,
Thay cómaunded his daughtres to areste,
And bryngen them bifore them in despite
Al naked, to fulfille their foule delight;
And in their fadres blood they made them daunce
Upon the pavement, God give them meschaunce.
For which these woful maydens, ful of drede,
Rather than they wolde lose their maydenhede,
They privily did lepe into a welle,
And drowned them-selfen, as the bookes telle.
"They of Mycenæ did inquere and seeke
Of Lacidomye fifty maydenes eek,
On whom thay wolden do their leccherie;
But ther was noon of al that companye
That was not slayn, and with a good entente
And rather chose to deye, than to assente
To ben deprivèd of her maydenhede.
Why shuld I then to deye be in drede?
"Lo eek the tyraunt Aristoclides,
That loved a mayden named Stimphalides,
When that her father slayn was on a night,

Unto Dyanes temple went she right,
And took the ymage in her hondes two,
Fro which ymáge wold she never go,
No wight could from the ymage her hands unlace,
Til she was slayn right in the selve place.
Now since that maydens hadde such despite
To be defoulèd with mannes foul delight,
Wel aught a wyf rather hir-self to slay,
Than be defoulèd, as it thenketh me.
" What shal I sey of Hasdrubaldes wyf,
That at Cartage byreft hir-self of lyf?
For when she saw that Romayns won the toun,
She took her children alle, and skipte adoun
Into the fyr, and rather chose to deye,
Than that a Romayn did her vilonye.
" Hath not Lucresse slayn her-self, allas!
At Rome, when that she oppressid was
Of Tarquyn? for her thought it was a shame
To lyven, when she hadde lost her name.
" The seven maydens of Milisie also
Have slayn themself for very drede and wo,
Rather than folk of Gawle them shulde oppresse.
More than a thousand stories, as I gesse,
Could I now telle as touching this matére.
" When Habradace was slayn, his wif so deere
Hir-self did slay, and let her blood to glyde
In Habradaces woundes, deepe and wyde;
And seyd, my body at the leste way
Ther shal no wight defoulen, if I may.
Why shold I more ensamples herof sayn?
Since that so many have them-selven slayn
Wel rather than they wolde defoulèd be,
I wol conclude that it is best for me
To slay myself than be defoulèd thus.
I wol be trewe unto Arviragus,
Or rather slay myself in som manér,
As did Democionis doughter deere.
Bycause she wolde nought defoulèd be.
O Cedasus, it is ful gret pity
To reden how thy doughters dyed, allas!
That slowe themself for suche maner case.
As gret a pity was it or wel more,

The Theban mayden, that for Nichonore
Herself did slay, right for such kind of wo.
Another Theban mayden did right so,
For one of Macidone had hir oppressed,
She with her deth her maydenhede redressed.
What shal I say of Nicerátis wif,
That for such case bereft hirself hir lyf?
How trewe eek was to Alcebiades
His love, that rather for to dyen chose,
Than for to suffre his body unburied be?
Lo, what a wif was Alceste," quoth she,
" What saith Omer of good Penelopee?
Al Grece knoweth of her chastitee.
Pardi, of Laodomya is writen thus,
That whan at Troye was slain Protheselaus,
No longer wold she lyve after his day.
The name of noble Porcia telle I may;
Withoute Brutus kynde she myght not lyve,
To whom she had al whole her herte give.
The parfyt wyfhod of Artemesye
Honóurèd is through al the Barbarie.
O Theuta queen, thy wifly chastitee
To alle wyves may a mirour be."
Thus playnèd Dorigen a day or tweye,
Purposyng ever that she wolde deye;
But nonetheless upon the thirde night
Home cam Arviragus, the worthy knight,
And askèd her why that she wepte so sore;
And she gan wepen ever more and more.
" Allas!" quoth she, " that ever was I born!
Thus have I sayd," quoth she, " thus have I sworn;"
And told him al, as ye have herd bifore;
It nedeth nought reherse it you no more.
This housbond with glad chere in noble wise
Answerd and sayde, as I shal you devyse.
" Is ther aught elles, Dorigen, but this?"
" Nay, nay," quoth she, " God me so be witnéss,
This is too moche, if it were Goodes wille."
" Yea, wyf," quoth he, " let things slepe that be stille,
It may be wel peráventure to day,
Ye shal your trothe holden, by my fay.

For God so wisly mercy have on me,
I hadde rather piercèd for to be,
For very love which to you I have,
Unless ye sholde your trothe kepe and save.
Trothe is the highest thing that men may kepe."
But with that word he gan anon to wepe,
And sayde, "I yow forbede on peyne of deth,
That never while thee lasteth lyf or breth,
To no wight telle thou of this áventúre.
As I may best I wil my wo endure.
Nor make no countenaunce of hevynesse,
That folk of you may deme harm or gesse."
And forth he cleped a squyer and a mayde.
"Go forth anon with Dorigen," he sayde,
"And bring ye her to such a place anon."
Thay take their leve, and on their wey are gon;
But thay ne wiste why she thither went,
He wold to no wight tellen his entent.

This squyer, which was named Aurelius,
On Dorigen that was so amerous,
Peráventure he happèd her to mete
Amyd the toun, right in the live strete;
As she was bound to go as was her othe
Toward the gardyn, there to kepe her trothe.
And he was to the gardyn-ward also;
For wel he spyèd when she wolde go
Out of her hous, to eny maner place.
But thus thay mette of áventure or grace,
And he saluteth her with glad entent,
And askith her whither and why she went.
And she him answered, half as she were mad,
"Unto the gardyn, as myn housbond bad,
My trothe for to holde, allas! allas!"
Aurilius gan wondre on this case,
And in his hert had gret compassioún
Of her, and of her lamentacioún,
And of Arviragus the worthy knight,
That bad her hold al that she hadde plight,
So loth he was his wif shuld breke hir trothe.
And in his hert he felt of this gret ruth,
And thoughte it best in hys opinioún,
That he shold leve his vile intencioún,
Nor do to her a cherlish wickedness

Agaynst nobilitee and gentilesse
For which in fewe wordes sayd he thus.
" Madame, tell your lord Arviragus,
That since I see his grete gentilesse
To you, and eek I see wel your distresse,
That he wold rather have shame (and that were
ruthe)
Than that to me ye shulde breke youre trothe,
I have wel rather ever to suffre woo,
Than for to harme the love bytwix you two.
I you relesse, madame, into your hand
Quyt every promise made and every bond
That ye have given to me as herebefore,
Since thilke tyme which that ye were born.
My trothe I plight, I shal you never grieve
For no promise, and here I take my leve,
As of the trewest and the beste wif
That ever yet I knew in al my lyf.
Let every wyf be ware of eny othe,
On Dorigen remember and her trothe.
Thus can a squyer do a gentil dede,
As wel as can a knyght, withoute drede."
She thanketh him upon her knees al bare,
And home unto her housbond is she fare,
And told him al, as ye have herd me sayd;
And, be ye sure, he was so wel repayd,
That it were impossible for me to write.
What shuld I longer of this case endite?
Arviragus and Dorigen his wif
In sovereyn blisse leden al their lyf,
Nor never was there anger them bytwen;
He cherissheth her as though she were a queen,
And she was to him trewe for evermore;
Of these two folk ye get of me nomore.
Aurilius, that his cost hath al forlorn,
Curseth the tyme that ever he was born.
" Allas! " quoth he, " allas, that by my bond
I promised to this wighte a thousand pound
Of pure gold, alas, now have I none;
I see no more, but that I am for-done.
Myn heritáge must I nedes selle,
And be a begger, here may I not duelle,
And shamen al my kyndrede in this place,

Save I of him may gete better grace.
But nonetheles I wil of him assay
On certeyn dayes yeer by yeer to pay,
And thanke him of his grete curtesye.
My trothe wol I kepe, I wol noght lye."
With herte sore he goth unto his cofre,
And broughte gold unto this philosóphre,
The value of fyf hundred pound, I gesse,
And him bysecheth of his gentilesse
To graunte him time for the rémenaúnt;
And sayde, "Maister, I dar make avaunt,
I fayled never of my trothe as yit.
For certaynly my dettes shal be quyt
Towardes you, how so that ever I fare
To go a begger in my kirtle bare;
But if ye wold vouchesafe on surety
Two yeer or three for to respite me,
Then were I wel, for else most I selle
Myn heritage, ther is nomore to telle."
This philosóphre sobrely answerde,
And seyde thus, when he these wordes herde;
"Have I not holden covenaunt unto thee?"
"Yes certes, wel and trewely," quoth he.
"Hast thou nought had thy lady as thee liketh?"
"No, no," quoth he, and sorrowfully he sigheth.
"What was the cause? tel me, if thou can."
Aurilius his tale anon bygan,
And told him al as ye have herd bifore,
It needeth nat to you reherse it more.
He sayde, Arviragus of gentilesse
Had rather dye in sorrow and distresse,
Than that his wyf shold of hir trouthe be fals.
The sorrow of Dorigen he tolde him also,
How loth she was to be a wykked wyf,
And that she rather wold have lost hir lyf;
And that hir trothe she kept thurgh innocence;
She never had heard speke of ápparence;
"That made me have of her so gret pytý.
And right as freely as he sent her me,
As frely sent I her to him agayn.
This is the summe, ther is no more to sayn."
The phílosópher answerd, "Deere brother,
Each one of you did gentilly to other;

Thou art a squyer, and he is a knight,
But God forbid it in his blisful might,
Unless a clerk coud do as gentil dede
As wel as eny of you, it is no drede.
Sire, I relesse thee thy thousond pound,
As if thou now were crept out of the ground,
And never bifore now had knowen me.
For, sir, I wil not take a peny of thee
For al my craft, nor nought for my travayle;
Thou hast y-payèd wel for my vitayle.
It is ynough, and far wel, have good day."
And took his hors, and forth he goth his way.
Lordynges, this questioun wolde I axe now,
Which was the moste noble, thinke you?
Now telle me, ere that I ferther wende.
I can no more, my tale is at an ende.

THE SECONDE NONNES TALE

The nurse and minister to evil within,
Which that men clepe in English ydelnesse,
She is the porter at the gates of sin,
Eschew her, and by her contrary her oppresse,
That is to say, by lawful besynesse,
Wel oughte *we* our business to fulfil,
Lest that the Fiend thurgh ydelnesse us spill.
For he that with his thousand cordes slye
Continuelly wayteth us to get,
When he may man in ydelnes espye,
He can so lightly catche him in his net,
Til that a man be caught and sure beset,
He is nought ware the fend hath him in honde;
Wel oughte we werk, and ydelnes withstonde.
And though men dredde never for to deye,
Yet see men wel by resoun douteless,
That ydelnes is roten sloggardye,
Of which ther cometh never good increase;
But sin that sloth ay holdeth in a leash,
Only to sleep, and for to drink and ete,
And to devouren al that others get.

And for to put from us such ydleness,
That cause is of so gret confusioún,
I have here don my faithful busyness
After the legende in translacioún
Right of this glorious lif and passioún,
Thou with thi garland, wrought with rose and
lylye,
Thee mene I, mayde and martir Cecilie;
And thou, that flour of holy virgines alle,
Of whom that Bernard loved so wel to write,
To thee at my bygynnyng first I calle;
Thou comfort of us wretches, make me endite
Thy mayden deth, that won thurgh hir merite
Theternal lif, and of the fiend victórie,
As man may after reden in her storie.
Thou mayde and moder, doughter of thi sone,
Thou welle of mercy, synful soules cure,
Whom that heigh God in bountee chose allone;
Humblest and best of every créatúre,
Thou didst enoble so far our natúre,
That no disdeyn the maker had of kynde
His son in blood and flessh to clothe and wind.
Withinne the cloyster of thi blisful sydes,
Took mannes shape the eternal love and peace,
That of the triple compas lord and guyde is,
The lord whom erthe and heven, land and seas
Ay praisen; and thou, virgine spotteless,
Bare of thy body, and dwellest mayden pure,
The créatoúr of every créatúre.
Assembled is in thee magnificence
With mercy, goodnes, and with such pitee,
That thou, that art the summe of excellence,
Not only helpist them that prayen thee,
But ofte tyme of thy benignitee
Ful frely, ere that men thin help beseech.
Thou goest bifore, and art their lives leech.
Now help, thou meke and blisful faire mayde,
Me exile wrecche, in this desert of galle;
Thenk on the womman Canaanite, that sayde
That whelpes ete some of the crumbes alle
That from their lordes table be i-falle;
And though that I, unworthy son of Eve,
Be synful, yet accepte my bileve.

And for that faith is deth withoute werks,
So for to werken give me wit and space,
That I be quit fro alle that most derk is;
O thou, that art so fair and ful or grace,
Be myn advócat in that hihe place,
There where withouten ende is sung Osanne,
Thou Cristes mother, doughter deere of Anne.
And with thi light my soule in prisoun light,
That troubled is by the contagioún
Of my bodý, and also by the weight
Of every lust and fals affecciоún;
O haven of refuge, o salvacioún
Of them that be in sorrow and in destresse,
Now help, for to my werk I wil me addresse.
Yet pray I you who reden that I write,
Forgeve me, that I do no diligence
This same story subtly to endite.
For both have I the wordes and the sense
Of him, that in the seintes reverence
The story wrote, and follow her legende,
And pray you that ye wil my werk amende
First wil I you the name of seint Cecilie
Expound, as men may in her story see;
It is to say on English, hevens lilie,
For pure chastenesse of virginitee;
Or that she witnesse hadde of honestee
And clean of conscience was and of good fame
The sweete savour, lilie was her name.
Or Cecile meneth this, the way of the blynde,
For she ensample was by way of techyng;
Or elles Cecily, as I writen fynde,
Is joynèd by a maner of conjoynynge
O heven and Lia, and here in figurynge
The heven is sette for thought of holynesse,
And Lia, for hir lastyng besynesse.
Cecili may eek be meant in this manére,
Wantyng of blyndnes, for hir grete light
Of sapience, and of all those graces cleere.
Or elles lo, this maydenes name bright
Of heven and Laos comes, of which by right
Men might her wel the heven of peple calle,
Ensample of goode and wise werkes alle.
For Laos peple in Englissh is to say;

And right as men may in the heven see
The sonne and moone, and sterres every way,
Right so men holy in this mayden free
See of true faith the magnanimitee,
And eek the clernes whole of sapience,
And sondry werkes, bright of excellence.
And right so as these philosófres wryte,
That heven is swyft and round, and eek burníng,
Right so was faire Cecily the whyte
Ful swyft and besy ever in good werkýnge,
And round and whole in good perséverynge,
And burning ever in charitee ful flame;
Now have I you declarèd all her name.
This mayden bright Cecilie, as her lyf saith,
Was comen of Romayns and of noble kynde,
And from her cradel fostred in the faith
Of Crist, and bare his Gospel in her mynde;
She never cessèd, as I writen fynde,
From here prayer, and God to love and drede,
Byseching him to kepe her maydenhede.
And when this mayde shuld unto a man
Y-wedded be, that was ful yong of age,
Which that i-namèd was Valirian,
And day was comen of her mariáge,
She ful devout and humble in hir corráge,
Under hir robe of gold, that sat ful faire,
Hadde next hir flessh a schirt al made of heire.
And whil the organs made melodie,
To God allone in herte thus sang she;
" O Lord, my soule and eek my body be
Unspotted, lest that I confounded be."
And for his love that deyde upon a tree,
Every secónd or thirdde day she faste,
Ay biddyng in her orisouns ful faste.
The nyght cam, and to bedde most she goon
With her housbond, as oft is the manere,
And privily to him she sayde anon;
" O swete and wel bilovèd spouse deere,
Ther is a counseil, if ye wold it heere,
Which that right fayn I wold unto you saye,
So that ye swere ye shul it not bytraye."
Valirian gan fast unto hir swere,
That for no case or thing that mighte be,

He sholde never for nothing bytreye her;
And thenne at erst thus to him sayde she;
" I have an aungel which that loveth me,
That with gret love, whether I wake or slepe,
Is redy ay my body for to kepe;
" And if that he may knowen, by my hede,
That ye me touche or love in vilonye,
He right anon wil slay you with the dede,
And in youre youthe thus ye shulde dye.
And if that ye with clene love me eye,
He wol you love as me, for your clennesse,
And shewe to you his joye and his brightnesse."
Valirian, corrected as God wolde,
Answerde agayn: " If I shal truste thee,
Let me that aungel see and him biholde;
And if that it a very aungel be,
Than wil I do as thou hast prayèd me;
And if thou love another man forsothe
Right with this swerd than wil I slee you bothe."
Cecilie answerd anon right in this wise;
" If that you list, the aungel shul ye see,
So that ye trust on Crist, and you baptise;
Go forth to Via Apia," quoth she,
" That from this toun standeth but myles three,
And to the pore folkes that there duelle
Say them right thus, as that I shal you telle.
" Telle them, I Cecilie you unto them sent,
To shewen you the good Urbán the olde,
For secret needes, and for good entent;
And when that ye seint Urban have byholde,
Tel him the wordes which that I yow tolde;
And when that he fro sinne hath purged you free,
Than shul ye se that aungel guardyng me."
Valirian is to the place y-gon,
And right as him was taught by his lernynge,
He found this holy old Urbán anon
Among the seyntes tombes there livinge;
And he anon withoute taryinge
Did his messáge, and when that he it tolde,
Urban for joye his handes gan upholde.
The teres from his eyen let he falle;
" Almyghty Lord, O Jhesu Crist," quoth he,

" Sower of chaste counseil, shepherd of alle,
The fruyt of that same seed of chastitee
That thou hast sown in Cecilie, tak to thee;
Loo, lik a busy bee withouten gyle
Thee serveth ay thin owne thral Cecile.
" For this same spouse, that she took righte now
Ful lyk a fiers lyoun, she sendeth here
As meek as ever was eny lamb to you."
And with that word anon ther gan appere
An old man, clad in white clothes clere,
That had a book with lettres of gold in honde,
And gan bifore Valirian to stonde.
Valirian, as deed, fel doun for drede,
Whan he him saw; and he him up caught so,
And on his book right thus he gan to rede;
" One Lord, one feith, one God withouten mo,
One Christendom, and one father of alle also,
Aboven alle, and over alle every where;"
These wordes al with golde ywriten were.
When this was redde, than sayde this olde man.
" Bileevest thou this or no? say ye or naye."
" I bileeve al this thyng," quoth Valerian,
" For truer thyng than this, I dare wel say,
Under the hevene no wighte thynken maye."
Then vanysshed the olde man, he knew not where,
And pope Urban him cristenede right there.
Valirian goth, and findeth Cecilie
Withinne his chambre with an aungel stonde
This aungel had of roses and of lilie
Coroúnes two, the which he bare in honde.
And first to Cecilie, as I understonde,
He gave the one, and after gave straighte
That other to Valerian hir mate.
" With body clene, and with unspotted thought,
Kepe ye ay wel these córounes," quothe he,
" Fro paradys to you I have them brought,
Ne never more shal they withered be,
Ne lose their sweete savour, truste me,
Ne never wight shal see them with his eye,
Save he be chast, and hate vilonye.

"And thou, Valirian, for thou so soon
Assentedist to good counseil, also
Say what thee list, and thou shalt have thi boone."
"I have a brother," quoth Valirian,
"More in this world I love no other man,
I pray you that my brother may have grace
To knowe the truthe, as I do in this place."
The aungel sayde, "God liketh thy request,
And bothe with the palme of martirdom
Ye shallen come unto his blisful feste."
And with that word, Tiburce his brother he broughte,
And whan that he the savour sweete had caught,
Which that the roses and the lilies cast,
Withinne his hert he gan to wonder fast.
And sayde, "I wondre this tyme of the yeer,
From whence that sweete savour cometh so
Of rose and lilies, that I smelle here;
For though I had them in myn hondes two,
The savour might in me no deeper go.
The swete smel, that in myn hert I fynde,
Hath chaungèd me al in another kynde."
Valirian sayd, "Two coroúns have we,
Snow-whyt and rose-reed, that shinen cleere,
Whiche that thine eyen have no might to see;
And as thou smellest them thurgh my prayere,
So shalt thou see them, lieve brothere deere,
If it so be thou wilt withouten slouthe
Bilieven aright, and knowen very truthe."
Tyburce answerde, "Sayst thou thus to me?
In sotheness, or in dream I herken this?"
"In dreames," quoth Valirian, "have we be
Unto this tyme, brother myn, I wis,
But now at first in truthe oure duellyng is."
"How knowst thou this," quoth Tyburce, "and in what wise?"
Quoth Valirian, "That shal I thee devyse.
"The aungel of God hath me the truthe y-taught,
Which thou shalt see, if that thou wilt deneye
The ydols, and be clene, and else not."
And of the miracles of these córones tweye

Seynt Ambrose in his preface list to seye;
Solemnely this noble doctour deere
Comendeth it, and saith in this maneére.
The palme of martirdom for to receyve,
Seynt Cecilie, fulfilled of God in heven,
The world and eek her marriage gan she leave;
For when Tiburce and Valerian were shriven,
God of his bountee to them two hath geven
Coroúnes two, of floures wel smellýnge,
And made his aungel them the crounes brynge.
The mayde hath brought these men to blisse above;
The world hath wist what it is worth certeyn,
Devocioún of chastitee to love—
Then shewed him Cecilie al open and pleyn,
That alle ydóles are but things in veyn;
For thay be doumb, and therto they be deaf,
And chargeth him his ydoles for to leve.
"Who-so that troweth not this, a beast he is,"
Quoth then Tyburce, "if that I shal not lye."
And she gan kisse his brest that herde this,
And was ful glad he coude the truthe espye;
"This day I take thee for myn allye,"
Sayde this blisful mayde faire and deere;
And after that she sayde as ye may heere.
"Lo, right so as the love of Crist," quoth she,
"Made me thy brotheres wyf, right in that wyse
Anon for myn allye heer take I thee,
Since that thou wilt thyne ydoles al despise.
Go with thy brother now and thee baptise,
And make thee clene, so that thou may biholde
The aungeles face, of which thy brother tolde."
Tyburce answerde, and sayde, "Brother dere,
First tel me whither I go, and to what man."
"To whom?" quoth he, "com forth with right good chere,
I wil thee lede unto the pope Urbán."
"Til Urban? brother myn Valirian,"
Quoth Tiburce, "wilt thou me thither lede?
Me thenketh that it were a wondrous dede.
"Meanest thou not that Urban," quoth he tho,
"That is so ofte damnèd to be deed,
And is in secret hidyng to and fro,

And dare nought ever once putte forth his heed?
Men shold him burnen in a fire so red,
If he were founde, or if men might him spye,
And us also to bere him companye.
" And while we seken this divinitee,
That is i-hyd in heven privily,
Doubtles i-burnt in this world thal we be."
To whom Cecilie answerde boldely,
" Men mighten dreden wel and skilfully
This lyf to lose, myn oune dere brother,
If here were lyvyng only and no other.
" But ther is better lif in other place,
That never shal be lost, drede thee nought;
Which Goddes sone us tolde thurgh his grace,
The Fathers sone that alle thing hath wrought;
And al that wrought is with a skilful thought,
The ghost that from the father gan procede,
Hath quickened all withouten eny drede.
" By word and miracle high Goddes sone,
When he was in this world, declarèd heere,
That ther was other lyf for meny a one."
To whom answerde Tyburce, " O sister deere,
Ne seydest thou right now in this manére,
Ther is but one God, one Lord, in sothfastnesse,
And now of three how mayst thou bere witnésse? "
" That shal I telle," quoth she, " ere that I go.
Right as a man hath sapiences three,
Memorie, skil, and intellect also,
So in one being in divinitee
Three persones doubteless may ther right wel be."
Then gan she him ful besily to preche
Of Cristes coming, and of his peynes teche,
And many pointes of his passioún;
How Goddes sone in this world long was holde
To do mankynde pleyn remissioún,
That was i-bounde in synne and cares colde.
Al this thing she unto Tyburce tolde,
And after this Tyburce in good entent,
With Valirian to pope Urban he went,
That thankèd God, and with glad hert and light
He cristened him, and made him in that place
Parfyt in al his lernynge, Goddes knyght.

And after this Tiburce gat such grace,
That every day he saw in time and space
The aungel of God, and every maner boon
That he God askèd, it was sped ful soon.
It were ful hard by ordre for to explayne
How many wondres Jhesus for them wroughte;
But atte last, to tellen short and playn,
The sergeants of the toun of Rome them soughte,
And them byfore Almache the perfect broughte,
Which questioned them, and knew alle their ententé,
And to the ymage of Jupiter them sente;
And saide, "Who-so wil not here sacrifise,
Swop off his hed, this is my sentence heere."
Anon these martires, that I you devyse,
One Maximus, that was an officere
Of the prefectes, and his corniculere,
Them took, and when he forth the seyntes ladde,
Himself he wept for pité that he hadde.
Whan Maximus had herd the seintes lore,
He gat him to his jailers fulle leve,
And bad them to his hous withouten more;
And with their preching, ere that it were eve,
They have y-made the jailers to bileeve,
And took from Maxime, and his folk each one,
The false faith, to trust in God allone.
Cecilie cam, when it was waxen night,
With prestes, that them cristened alle in feere;
And afterward, when day was waxen light,
Cecilie them sayde with a ful stedefast chere;
"Now, Cristes owne knyghtes leef and deere,
Cast al away the werkes of derknéss,
And arm you al in armur of brightnéss.
"Ye have forsothe y-don a greet batayle;
Youre cours is don, youre faith have ye conserved!
Go to the coroun of lyf that may not fayle;
The rightful judge, which that ye have served,
Shal geve it you, as ye have it deserved."
And when this thing was sayd, as I devyse,
Men ladde them forth to do the sacrifise.
But when they were to the place y-brought,
To telle shortly the conclusioún,

They wold incense or sacrifice right nought,
But on their knees they setten them adoun,
With humble hert and sad devocioún,
And leften bothe their heedes in the place;
Their soules wenten to the king of grace.
This Maximus, that saw this thing betyde,
With piteous teeres tolde it anon right,
That he their soules saw to heven glyde
With aungels, ful of clerness and of light;
And with his word converted many a wight.
For which Almachius hath hys body torn
With whippes of lead til he hys lif hath lorn.
Cecilie him took, and buried him anon
By Tiburce and Valirian softely,
Withinne her berieng place, under the stone.
And after this Almachius hastily
Bad his ministres fetchen openly
Cecilie, so that she might in his presence
Do sacrifice, and Jupiter incense.
But they, converted by her wise lore,
Wepten ful sore, and gaven ful credénce
Unto her word, and cryden more and more;
"Crist, Goddes sone, withouten difference,
Is very God, this is al oure sentence,
That hath so good a servaunt him to serve;
Thus with one vois we trowen, though we sterve."
Almachius, that herd of this doynge,
Bad fetchen Cecilie, that he might her see,
And at the first, lo, this was his axinge:
"What maner womman art thou then?" quoth he.
"I am a gentil-womman born," quoth she.
"I axe thee," quoth he, "though thee it greve,
Of thi religioún and of thi byleve."
"Ye have bygonne your questioun foolishly,"
Quoth she, "that wolden two answers conclude
In one demaunde; ye axen ignorantly."
Almache answerde to that similitude,
"Of whens then cometh thin answering so rude?"
"Of whens?" quoth she, when she was constreyned,
"Of conscience, and of good faith unfeyned."

Almachius sayde, "Takest thou then no heede
Of my powér?" and she answerede him this;
"Youre might," quoth she, "ful litel is to drede;
For every mortal mannes power is
But lyk a bladder ful of wynd, I wis;
For with a nedels poynt, when it is blown,
May al the boast of it be layd adoun."
"Ful wrongfully byganne thou," quoth he,
"And yet in wrong is thy perséveraúnce.
Knowest thou not oure mighty princes free
Have thus comaunded and made ordinaunce,
That every cristen wight shal pay penaunce,
Save that he his Cristendom withsay,
And go al quyt, if he wil it deneye?"
"Youre princes erre, and eek youre nobles doth,"
Quoth then Cecilie; "and with a mad sentence
Ye make us guilty, and it is nought sooth;
For ye that knowen wel oure innocence,
Forásmoche as we do ay reverence
To Crist, and for we bere a Cristen name,
Ye putten on us a cryme and eek a blame.
"But we that knowen Cristes name so
For vertuous, we may it not withseye."
Almache sayde, "Choose one of these two,
Do sacrifice or Cristendom deneye,
That thou may now escapen by that weye."
At which the holy blisful faire mayde
Gan for to laughe, and to the judge sayde;
"O judge confusèd in this great folly,
Wilt thou that I deny my innocence?
To make me a wikked wight," quoth she.
"Lo, he dissimuleth here in audience,
He starith and is mad in his sentence."
To whom Almachius sayde, "Unholy wretche,
Knowest thou nought how far my might may stretche?
"Have nought our mighty princes to me y-given,
Yea bothe power and eek auctoritee
To make folk to deyen or to lyven?
Why spekest thou so proudly then to me?"

" I speke not but stedefastly," quoth she,
" Nought proudly, for I say, as for my syde,
We haten deedly that same vice of pryde.
" And if thou drede nought a sooth to heere,
Then wil I shewe al openly by right,
That thou hast made a ful greet lying heere.
Thou saist, thy princes have i-give thee might
Bothe for to slay and make alive a wight,
Thou that canst not but only lif bereve,
Thou hast no other power nor no leve.
" But thou maist say, thi princes have thee makèd
Minister of deth: for if thou speke of mo,
Thou liest; for thy power is ful naked."
" Do way thy ignorance," sayd Almachius tho,
" And sacrifice to oure goddes, ere thou go.
I recke nought what wrong that thou me profre,
For I can suffre it as a philosóphre.
" But these wronges may I not endure,
That thou here spekist of oure gods," quoth he.
Cecilie answered, " O nice créatúre,
Thou saydest no word since thou spake to me,
In which I knew not al thy great folie,
And that thou were in every maner wise
A silly officer, a vein justice.
" Ther lakketh no thing to thin outer eyne
That thou art blynd; for things that we see alle
That it is stone, that men may wel espien,
That same stone a god thou wilt it calle.
I axe the, let thin hond upon it falle,
And tast it wel, and stoon thou shalt it fynde;
Since that thou seest not with thin eyen blynde.
" It is a shame that the poeple shal
So scorne thee, and laughe at thy folýe;
For comunly men wot it one and al,
That mighty God is in his heven hye;
And these ymáges, wel thou mayst espie,
To thee nor to themself may nought profyte,
For in effect they be nought worth a myte."
Thise wordes and such other then sayde she;
And he wax wroth, and bad men shold hir lede
Hom to her hous; " And in her hous," quoth he,
" Burne her right in a bath of flammes red,"

And as he bad, right so was don the dede;
For in a bath thay gonne her faste shut,
And nyght and day greet fire they under put.
The longe night, and eek a day also,
For al the fire, and eek the bathes hete,
She sat al cold, and felte of it no wo,
Hit made her not one drope for to swete.
But in that bath her deth she moste get;
For he Almachius, with ful wikked entente,
To slay hir in the bath his men he sente.
Three strokes in the nek he smote her tho
The tormentour, but for no maner chance
He might nought smyte her faire necke in two.
And for ther was that tyme an ordinaunce
That no man sholde do eny such penaúnce
The fourthe strok to smyten, softe or sore,
This tormentour ne durste do no more;
But half deed, with hir nek y-carven there,
He on hys way is gone and lete her lye.
The cristen folk, which that about her were,
With sheetes wrappèd have her faire bodye;
Thre dayes lyved she in this miserie,
And never cessèd them the faith to teche.
Al that she taughte them first, she gan to preche.
And them she gaf her welth and everything,
And in pope Urbans care she putte them tho,
And sayde thus, " I axe this of heven kyng,
To have respite thre dayes and no mo,
To recomende to you, ere that I go,
These soules lo, and that there mighte be
Heer in myn hous a chirche perpetuelly."
Seynt Urban, with his dekenes privily
The body took, and buried it by nighte
Among his other seyntes honestely.
Her hous the chirch of seynt Cecily yet highte;
Seynt Urban hallowed it, as he wel mighte;
In which into this day in noble wyse
Men do to Crist and to his seint servise.

THE CANONES YEOMANS TALE

When ended was the lif of seynt Cecile,
Ere we had fully riden fyve myle,
At Boughtoun under Blee us gan oertake
A man, that clothèd was in clothes blake,
And under that he ware a white array,
His hackeney, that was a dapple grey,
So swet, that it was wonder for to see,
It semèd he hadde prickèd myles three.
The hors eek that his Yeoman rode upon,
So swet, that scarcely further might he gon.
Aboute the brestplate stood the fome ful hye,
He was with fome as flekkèd as a pye.
A bagge twofold on his crupper lay,
It semèd that he caried litel array,
Al light for summer rode this worthy man.
And in myn herte to wonder I bigan
What that he was, til that I understood,
How that his cloke was sowed unto his hood;
For which when long I had avysèd me,
I demèd him som canoun for to be.
His hat heng at his back doun by a lace,
For he hadde riden more than trot or pace,
He had i-prickèd like as he were wood.
A docke-leef he had under his hood
For sweat, and for to kepe his hed from hete.
But it was joye for to see him swete;
His forhed droppèd as a stillatorie
Were ful of plantayn and of peritorie.
And when that he was com, he gan to crie,
"God save," quoth he, "this joly companye!
Fast have I prickèd," quoth he, "for your sake
Bycause that I wolde you overtake,
To ryden in this mery companye."
His Yeoman eek was ful of curtesye,
And seide, "Sirs, now in the morning tyde
Out of your ostelry I saw you ryde,
And warnèd heer my lord and my soverayn,
Which that to ryden with you is ful fayn,
For his disport; he loveth daliaúnce."

"Frend, God be thankèd for thine ácqueyntánce,"
Oure Host answerde, "for certes it wolde seme
Thy lord were wys, and so I may wel deme;
He is ful jocund also dare I leye;
Can he not telle a mery tale or tweye,
With which he may delite this companye?"
"Who, sir? my lord? Yea, yea, withoute lye,
He can of merthe and eek of jolitee
Ynough for al; also, sir, truste me,
If ye him knewe that as wel as I,
Ye wolde wonder how wel and thriftily
He coude werke, and that in sondry wise.
He hath taken on him many an enterprise,
Which were ful hard for al this companye
To bringe aboute, but only by studie.
Though homely as he rides amonges you,
If ye him knew, ye wold be glad enow,
Ye never wolde for-go his ácqueyntaúnce
For moche good, I dare lay in balaunce
Al that I have in my possessioun.
He is a man of high discression,
I warne you wel, he is a lerned man."
"Wel," quoth our Ost, "I pray thee, tel then,
Is he a clerk, or no? tel what he is."
"Nay, he is gretter than a clerk I wis,"
Sayde the Yeoman, "and in wordes fewe,
Ost, of his craft somwhat I wil you shewe.
I say, my lord can such a subtiltee,
(But al his craft ye may nought wit of me,
And somwhat helpe I yet to his workynge),
That al this ground on which we be ridynge
Til that we come to Caunterbury toun,
He coude al clene turnen up so doun,
And pave it al of silver and of gold."
And whan this Yeoman hadde thus i-told
Unto oure Ost, he seyde, "*Bencite!*
This thing is wonder merveylous to me,
Syn that this lord is of so high prudénce,
Bycause of which men shuld him reverence,
That of his worship recketh he so light
His over cote it is not worth a myte

For suche a man; that ye may see and know
It is al filthy and to-tore also.
Why is thy lord so slottish, I thee preye,
And yet hath power better clothes to buy,
If that his might accorde with thy speche?
Telle me that, and that I thee biseche."
"Why?" quoth this Yeoman, "wherto axe ye me?
God help me so, for he shal never thee,
(But I wol nought avowe what I say,
And therfor kep it secret I you pray)
He is too wys in faith, as to my thought.
That which is over-don, it wil be naught,
As clerkes say, too much is naught at al;
Wherfore in that a fool I may him call.
For when a man hath over-greet a wit,
Ful ofte him happeth to mysusen it;
So doth my lord, and that me greveth sore.
God it amende, I can say now nomore."
"Care not for that, good Yeoman," quoth oure Ost,
"Since of the cunnyng of thy lord thou knowest,
Tel how he doth, I pray thee hertily,
Since that he is so crafty and so sly.
Where dwellen ye, if ye may tellen me?"
"In the suburbes of a toun," quoth he,
"Lurking in secrets and in lanes blynde,
Wher as the robbours and the theves by kynde
Holden their privy fearful residence,
As men that dare not shewen their presénce;
So faren we, if I shal say the sothe."
"Now," quoth oure Ost, "yet let me talke to thee;
Why art thou so discoloured on thy face?"
"Peter!" quoth he, "God yield me of his grace,
I am so usèd in the fyr to blowe,
That it hath chaungèd al my colour I trowe;
I am not wont in no miroúr to prie,
But labour sore, and lerne to multiplie.
We blonder ever, and gaze into the fyr,
And for al that we faile of oure desire,
For ever we lacken oure conclusioún.
To moche folk we bring but illusioún,

And borrow gold, be it a pound or tuo,
Or ten or twelve, or many sommes mo,
And make them thinken at the leaste weye,
That of a single pound we can make tweye.
Yet is it fals; and ay we have good hope
It for to do, and after it we grope.
But that sciénce is so far us bifore,
We never can, although we had it sworn,
It overtake, it slideth away so fast;
It wol us make beggers atte last."

Whil this Yeoman was thus in his talkyng,
This Canoun drew him near and herd al thing
Which that this Yeoman spak, for suspicioún
Of mennes speche ever had this Canoún;
For Cato saith, that he that guilty is,
Demeth al thing be spoke of him, I wis;
By-cause of that he gan so nigh to ride
That al these words he herd right at his syde;
And thus he sayd unto his Yeoman tho;
"Hold now thy pees, and speke no wordes mo;
For if thou do, thou shalt it deere abye:
Thow slaundrest me here in this companye,
And eek discoverest that thou shuldest hide."
"Yea," quoth oure Ost, "tel on, what so by-tyde,
Of alle this thretnyng reck thee nought a myte."
"In faith," quoth he, "no more do I but lite."
And whan this Canoun saw it wold not be,
But this Yeoman wolde telle his privitee,
He fled away for very sorrow and shame.
"A!" quoth this Yeoman, "here shal rise a game;
Al that I know anon now wil I telle,
Since he is gon; the foule feend him quelle!
For never wil I meete him far or neere
For peny nor for pound, I wol it swere.
He that me broughte first unto that game,
Ere that he deye, sorrow have he and shame!
For it is ernest to me, by my faith;
That fele I wel, what-so that any saith;
And yet for al my smart, and al my greef,
For al my sorrow, and labour, and mescheef,
I coude never leve it in no wise.

Now wolde God my wyt might wel suffise
To tellen al that longeth to that art;
But nonetheles, yet wil I telle you part;
Since that my lord is gon, I wol nought spare,
Such thing as that I knowe, I wol declare.
" With this Canoún I duellèd have seven yer
But to his science am I never near;
Al that I hadde, I have y-lost therby,
And God wot, so hath many mo than I.
Though I was wont to be right fresh and gay
Of clothing, and of other good array,
Now may I were an hose upon myn heed;
And where my colour was both fressh and red,
Now it is wan, and of a leden hewe,
(Who-so it useth, sore shal he rewe);
And of my toil, yet blinking is myn eye;
Such ávantáge it is to multiplie!
That slippery science hath me made so bare,
That I have no good, wher that ever I fare;
And yet I am endetted so therby
Of gold, that I have borrowed trewely,
That whil I lyve shal I it paye never;
Lat every man be war by me for ever,
What maner man that casteth eyes thereon,
If he continue, I holde his thrift is gon:
So help me God, therby shal he not wynne,
But empte his purs, and make his wittes thynne.
And when he, thurgh his madnes and folye,
Hath lost his owne good in jeopardie,
Than he exciteth other men therto,
To lose their good, as he himself hath do.
For unto shrewes joy it is and ese
To have their felawes in peyne and in desese.
Thus was I once ytaught and by a clerk;
No care for that; I wil speke of oure werk.
Whan we be ther where we shul exercise
Oure elvish craft, we seme wondrous wyse,
Oure termes be so lerned and so queynte.
I blowe the fyr til that myn herte feynte.
What shulde I tellen ech proporcioun
Of thinges which we werken up and doun,
To take fyve or six ounces, may wel be,
Of silver, or som other quantitee?

And busy me to telle you the names
Of orpiment, burnt bones, iron squames,
That into poudre grounden be ful smal?
And in an erthen pot how put is al,
And salt y-put in, and also pepper,
With al these poudres that I speke of heere,
And wel i-covered with a lamp of glas?
And of moche other thing what that ther was?
And of the pot and glass and fastening,
That of the aier mighte passe no thing?
And of the esy fyr, and smert also,
Which that was made? and of the care and wo,
That we hadde in oure maters sublimynge,
And in amalgamynge, and calcinynge
Of quyksilver, y-clept mercury crude?
For alle oure sleightes we can nought conclude
Oure orpiment, and sublyment mercurie,
Oure grounde litarge eek on the porfurye,
Of ech of these of ounces a certayn
Not helpeth us, oure laboure is in vayn.
Nor yet our spirits and their ascencioun,
Ne eek our maters that lie fixed adoun,
Can in oure werkyng us no thing avayle;
For lost is al oure labour and travayle,
And al the cost on twenty devel way
Is lost also, which we upon it lay.
Ther is also ful many another thing,
That is to oure craft appértenýng,
Though I by ordre them reherse not can,
Bycause that I am no lerned man,
Yet wil I telle them, as they come to mynde,
Though I can not them set right in their kind;
As sal armoniak, verdegres, boras;
And sondry vessels made of erthe and glas,
Oure urinals and oure descensories,
Viols, croslets, and sublimatories,
Concurbites, and álembikes eeke,
And othere suche, not worthe a greene leeke,
It needeth not to réhersen them alle;
And watres rubifying, and boles galle,
Arsenek, sal armoniak, and brimstoon.
And herbes coude I telle eek many a one,
As egrimoigne, valirian, and lunarie,

And other suche, if that me list to tarie;
Oure lampes brennyng bothe night and day,
To bringe aboute oure craft if that we may;
Oure fournies eek of calcinacioun,
And of our watres albificacioun,
Unslekked lym, chalk, and glayre of an ey,
Poudres dyvers and asshes, dong, and cley,
Cerèd poketts, sal petre, vitriole;
And dyvers fyres made of woode and cole;
Salt tartre, alcaly, and salt preparat,
And combust materes, and coagulat;
Cley made with hors or mannes hair, and oyle
Of tartre, alym, glas, barm, wort, and argoyle,
Resalgar, and oure maters enbibing;
And eek of oure maters encorporing,
And of oure silver citrinacioun,
Our cementynge and fermentacioun,
Oure yngottes, testes, and ful many mo.
I wol you telle as was me taught also
The foure spirits, and the bodies al
By ordre, as often herd I my lord call.
The firste spirit quyksilver callèd is;
The secound orpiment; the thridde I wis
Sal armoniac, and the ferthe bremstoon.
The bodies seven, eek, lo heer anon.
Sol gold is, and Luna silver we declare;
Mars yron, Mercurie is quyksilver;
Saturnus leed, and Jubitur is tyn,
And Venus coper, by my fathers kyn.
" This cursed craft who so wil exercise,
He shal no good have that may him suffise;
For al the good he spendeth theraboute
He lose shal, therof have I no doute.
Who-so that list to shewen his folye,
Let him come forth and lerne multiplie;
And every man that hath ought in his cofre,
Let him appere, and waxe a philosófre,
And though that craft so easy is to lere.
Nay, nay, God wot, al be he monk or frere,
Prest or canoun, or eny other wight
Though he sit at his book bothe day and night
In lernynge of this elvish nice lore,
Al is in vayn, he lerneth nothing more

To teach a foolish man this subtiltee,
Fy, spek not therof, for it wil not be.
If he know letters wel, if he know none,
As in effect, he shal fynd it al one;
For bothe two, by my salvacioún,
Concluden in multiplicacioún
The same alike when they have al y-do;
This is to sayn, thay fayle bothe two.
Yet forgat I to make réhersáyle
Of watres corosif, and of lymayle,
And of bodýes mollificacioun,
And also of their enduracioun,
Oyles ablucioun, and metal fusible,
To tellen al, wold passen eny bible
That ever is; wherfore, as for the best,
Of alle these names now wil I me rest:
For, as I trowe, I have you told enough
To reyse a feend, al loke he never so rough.
A, nay, let be; the philosophre stoon,
Elixir clept, we seeken it each one,
For had we him, then were we sure y-nough;
But unto God of heven I make avow,
For al oure craft, when we have al y-do,
And al oure sleight, he wol not come us to.
He hath i-made us spende moche good,
For sorrow of which almost we waxen wood,
But that good hope crepeth in oure herte,
Supposing ever, though we sore smerte,
To be relievèd by him after-ward.
Such súpposing and hope is sharp and hard.
I warne you wel it is to seken ever.
That future time hath made men dissevere,
In trust thereof, from al that ever they hadde.
Yet of that art thay never wexe sadde,
For unto them it is a bitter swete;
So semeth it; for had thay but a sheete
In which thay mighte wrappe them for the night,
And eek a cloke to walke inne by day-light,
They wolde them selle, and spenden on this craft;
Thay can nought stinte, til no thing be laft.
And evermore, wher ever that they gon,
Men may them knowe by smellyng of brem-
stoon;

For al the world thay stynken as a goat;
Their savour is so rammyssh and so hot,
That though a man fro them a myle be,
The savour wil infecte him, truste me.
Lo, thus by smellyng and by thred-bare array,
If that men list, this folk they knowe may.
And if a man wil aske them privily,
Why thay be clothèd so unthriftily,
Right there anon thay whisper in his eere,
And say, that if thay ever espièd were,
Men wold them slee, bycause of their science;
Lo, thus this folk bytrayen innocence.
Passe over this, I go my tale unto.
Ere that the pot be on the fyr y-do
Of metals with a certeyn quantitee,
My lord them tempreth, and no man but he;
(Now he is gon, I dar say boldely)
For as men sayn, he can do craftily;
Although I wot wel he hath such a name,
And yet ful ofte he renneth into shame;
"And wit ye how? ful ofte it happeth so,
The pot to-breketh, and farwel, al is go.
These metals be of so gret violence,
Oure walles may not make them résistence,
But if thay were wrought of lime and stoon;
Thay piercen so, that thurgh the wal thay gon;
And some of them wil synken into the grounde,
(Thus have we lost by tymes many a pounde),
And some are skatered al the floor aboute;
Some lepe into the roof, withouten doute.
Though that the feend nought in oure sight him shewe,
I trowe that he with us be ever mo.
In helle, wher that he is lord and sire,
There never was suche wo or anger or ire.
As when oure pot is broke, as I have sayd,
Every man chideth, and thinketh him ill paid.
Som sayd it was too long on the fyr-makyng;
Some sayde nay, it was on the blowyng;
(Than was I feard; for that was myn office).
'Straw!' quod the third, 'ye been fools I wis,
It was nought tempred as it oughte be.'
'Nay,' quoth the ferthe, 'stynt and herken me;

Bycause oure fyr was nought of beech y-made,
That is the cause, non other to be sayd.'
I can not telle wherein it runneth wrong,
But wel I wot gret stryf is us among.
'What?' quoth my lord, "ther is no more to doon,
Of these periles I wil be ware eftsoon.
I am right certeyn, that the pot was crasèd.
Be as be may, be ye no thing amasèd.
As usage is, let swoope the floor up soon;
Pluk up your hertes and be glad and boon.'
The remnaunt on an heep i-swopèd was,
And on the floor y-cast a canevas,
And al this remnaunt in a syve i-throwe,
And sifted, and y-plukkèd many a throwe.
'In faith,' quoth one, 'somwhat of oure metal
Yet is ther heer, though that we have nought al.
And though this thing myshappèd hath as now,
Another tyme it may be wel y-now.
Us moste putte oure good in áventúre.
A marchaunt, truly, may not ay endure,
Truste me wel, in his prosperitee,
Som tyme his good is drownèd in the see,
And som tyme cometh it sauf unto the londe.'
'Pees!' quoth my lord, 'now I will take in hond
To bringe oure craft al in a better game,
If I no not, sirs, let me have the blame;
Ther was defaulte in som what, wel I wot.'
Another sayde, the fyr was over hot.
But be it hot or cold, I dar say this,
That we concluden evermor amys;
We faile of that which that we wolden have,
And in oure madnesse evermore we rave.
And when we be together every one,
Every man semeth a Salamon.
But al thing which that shineth as the gold,
Is nought gold, as that I have herde told;
Nor every appel that is fair at eye,
Is always good, what so men clappe or crye.
Right so, lo, fareth it amonges us.
He that semeth the wisest, by Jesus!
Is most fool, when it cometh to the preef;

And he that semeth trewest is a theef.
That shul ye knowe, ere that I from you wende,
When that I of my tale have made an ende.
" Ther is a canoun of religioun
Amonges us, wold infecte al a toun,
Though it as gret were as was Niniveh,
Rome, Alisaundre, Troye, or other three,
His sleight and eek his infinite falsnesse
Ther coude no man writen, as I gesse,
Though that he mighte lyven a thousand yeer;
Nor in this world of falsheed is his peer,
For in his termes he wol him so wynde,
And speke his wordes in so sly a kynde,
Whan he comune shal with eny wight,
That he wil make him mazèd anon right,
Save he a feend be, as himselven ís.
Ful many a man hath he bygiled ere this,
And wil, if that he lyve may a while;
And yet men ryde and go ful many a myle
Him for to seeke, and have his áqueintaúnce,
Nought knowyng of his false governaunce.
And if you list to geve me audience,
I wil it tellen here in youre presence.
But, worshipful canoúns religious,
Pray deme not that I slaunder youre hous,
Although my tale now of a canoun be.
In every ordre som shrewe is, pardee;
And God forbede that al a companye
Be blamèd for a singuler mannes folýe.
To slaunder you is no thing myn entent,
But to correcten that is amiss i-ment.
This tale was not only told for you,
But eek for other mo; ye wot wel how
That among Cristes ápostelles twelve
Ther was no traytour but Judas himselve;
Than why shulde al the remenaunt have a blame,
That giltless were? to you I say the same.
Save only this, if ye wil herken me,
If any Judas in youre convent be,
Remove him out betimes, I you bid,
For fere that shame or loss may causen drede.
And be no thing displesèd, I you pray,
But in this case now herken what I say."

In Londoun was a prest, a chappelyn,
That had ydwellèd many a yer therin.
Which was so plesaunt and so servisable
Unto the lodging, wher he was at table,
That they wolde suffre him no thing for to pay
For bord or clothing, went he never so gay;
And spending silver had he right y-nough;
No more of that; I wol procede as now,
And telle forth my tale of the canoún,
That broughte this prest to confusion.

This false canoun cam upon a day
Unto the prestes chambre wher he lay,
Biseching him to lend him a certeyn
Of gold, and he wold quyt it him ageyn.
"Lend me a mark," quoth he, "but dayes three,
And at my day I wil it paye thee.
And if so be, that thou me fynde lie,
Another day honge me up on high."
This prest him gave a mark, and that anon,
And this canoun him thankid ofte then,
And took his leve, and wente forth his wey;
And atte third day brought hym his money,
And to the prest he gave his gold agayn,
Wherof this prest was wonder glad and fayn.
"Certes," quoth he, "no thing annoyeth me
To lend a man a noble, or tuo, or three,
Or what thing were in my possessioun,
When he so trewe is of condicioun,
That in no wise he breke wil his day;
To such a man I never can say nay."
"What?" quoth this canoun, "shold I be untrewe?
Nay, that same thing to me were somwhat newe.
Trothe is a thing that I wil ever kepe,
Unto that day in which that I shal crepe
Into my grave, and else God it forbede!
Bilieve that as certeyn as your crede.
God thank I, and in good tyme be it sayd,
That ther was never man yet evel payd
For gold or silver that to me he lent,
Nor never falshed in myn hert I ment.
And, sir," quoth he, "now to speak privily,
Since ye so goodly have been unto me,

And shewed to me so gret gentilesse,
Som-what, to quyte with youre kyndenesse,
I wil you shewe, and if you lust to here
I wil you teche pleynly the manére,
How I can werken in philosophie.
Tak thou good heed, ye shul seen wel with eye,
That I wol do a wonder ere I go."
"Yea?" quoth the prest, "yea, sir, and wil ye so?
Mary! therof I pray you hertily."
"At youre comaundement, sir, trewely."
Quoth the canoun, "and else God it forgive!"
Lo, how this theef coude thus his servise give.
Ful soth it is that such profred servíse
Stynketh, as witnessen the old and wise;
And that ful soon I wil it verifye
In this canoun, root of al treccherie,
That evermor delit hath and gladnesse
(Such feendly thoughtes in his hert have place)
How Cristes poeple he may to meschief bringe:
God kepe us from his fals dissemblynge!
What wiste this priest with whom that he delte?
Nor of his comyng harm he no thing felte.
O sely priest, o innocent of mind,
With greed of money anon thou shalt be blind;
O graceless, ful blynd is thy conceyt,
No thing art thou now ware of the deceyt,
Which that this fox i-shapen hath to thee,
His wily wrenches now thou maist not flee,
Wherfor to go to the conclusioun,
That réferreth to thy confusion,
Unhappy man, anon I wil me hie
To tellen thin unwit and thy folýe,
And eek the falsnesse of that other wretche,
As far forth as my connyng wil it stretche.
This canoun was my lord, ye wolde weene;
Sir Ost, in faith, and by the heven queene,
It was another canoun, and not he,
That can an hundred fold more subtiltee.
He hath bitrayèd folkes many a tyme;
Of his falsness it dullith me to ryme.
And ever when I speke of this falshede,
For shame of him my cheekes wexen red;

And now they have bygonne for to glowe,
Though redness have I noon, right wel I knowe,
In my viságe, for the fumes diverse
Of metals, which ye have me herd reherse,
Consumed and wasted have al my reednesse.
Now tak heed of this canouns cursednesse.
" Sir," quoth he to the priest, " let your man goon
For quyksilver, that we it have anon:
And let him bringen ounces tuo or three;
And when he cometh, as faste shul ye see
A wonder thing, which ye saw never ere this."
" Sir," quoth the priest, " it shal be doon, I wis."
He bad his servaunt fetchen him his thinges,
And he al redy was at his biddynges,
And went him forth, and com anon agayn
With his quyksilver, shortly for to sayn,
And took these ounces three to the canoun;
And he it layde faire and wel adoun,
And bad the servaunt coles for to bringe,
That he anon might go to his werkynge.
The coles weren right anon i-fett,
And this canoun took out a crosselett,
Out of his bosom, and shewed it to the priest.
" This instrument," quoth he, " which that thou seest,
Tak in thin hond, and put thiself therinne
Of this quyksilver an ounce, and here bygynne
In the name of Crist to wax a philosophre.
Ther be ful fewe, to whiche that I wolde profre
To shewe them thus moche of my science;
For ye shul see heer by experience,
That this quiksilver I wil mortifye,
Right in youre sight anon, withouten lye,
And make it as good silver and as fyn
As ther is any in youre purs or myn,
Or elsewher; and make it malleable;
And elsholde me fals and unable
Amonges folk for ever to appeere.
I have a powder heer that cost me deere,
Shal make al good, for it is cause of al
My connyng, which that I you shewe shal.
Send out youre man, and let him be theroute;

And shut the dore, whils we be aboute
Oure privitee, that no man us aspye,
Whiles we werken in this philosophie."
Al, as he bad, fulfillèd was in dede.
This ilke servaunt anon right out is sped,
And then his master shut the dore anon,
And to their labour speedily thay goon.
This priest, at this cursed canouns biddyng,
Upon the fyr anon he sette this thing,
And blew the fyr, and busied him ful fast;
And this canoun into the crosslet cast
A powder, I knew not wherof it was
I-made, either of chalk, either of glas,
Or som what else, that was nought worthy a flye
To blynde with this priest; and bad him ply
These coles for to couch them al above
The crosslet; for " in token I thee love,"
Quoth this canoun, " thou with thin handes tuo
Shal werken al thing which that shal be do."
" Graunt mercy," quoth the priest, and was ful glad,
And couched the coles as the canoun bad.
And whil he busy was, this feendly wretche,
This false canoun (the foule feend him fetche!)
Out of his bosom took a false cole,
In which ful subtilly was made an hole,
And therin put was of silver metál
An ounce, and stoppèd was withoute fayle
This hole with wax, to kepe the metal in.
And understond ye, that this false gyn
Was not made there, but it was made bifore;
And other thinges I shal telle more
Here after-ward, which that he with him broughte.
Ere he com there, to bigyle him he thought,
And so he dede, ere thay two wente awaye;
Til he had cheated him, he did not stay.
It dulleth me, when that I of him speke;
On his falsnesse fayn wold I me wreke,
If I wist how, but he is heer and there,
He is so variant, he bideth no where.
But take ye heed now, sirs, for Goddes love.
He took this cole of which I spak above,

And in his hond he bare it privily,
And whiles the prieste couchèd bysily
The coles, as I tolde you ere this,
This canoun sayde, "Freend, ye do amys;
This is not couchèd as it oughte be,
But soon I shal amenden it," quoth he.
"Now let me meddle therwith but a while,
For of you have I pitee, by seint Gile!
Ye be right hot, I see wel how ye swete;
Have heer a cloth and wype away the wete."
And whiles that this priest him wypèd has,
This canoun took his cole, I curse his face!
And layd it doun above on the myd-ward
Of the crosslet, and blew wel afterward,
Til that the coles gonne faste brenne.
"Now geve us drinke," quoth the canoun thenne,
"Now soon al shal be wel, I undertake.
Sitte we doun, and let us mery make."
And when that now the canounes false cole
Was brent, al the metál out of the hole
Into the crosselet anon fel adoun;
And so it moste needes by resoún;
Since it so even aboven couchèd was;
But therof wist the priest no thing, allas!
He demèd alle the coles weren goode,
For of the sleight he no thing understood.
And whan this alchemister saw his tyme,
"Rys up, sir priest," quoth he, "and stonde by me;
And for I wot wel ingot have ye noon,
Go, walke forth, and brynge me a chalk-stoon;
For I wol make it of the same shap,
That is an ingot, if I may have hap.
And bringe with you a bolle too or a panne
Ful of water, and ye shul wel see thanne
How that oure besyness shal happe and preve.
And yit, for ye shul have no mysbileeve
Nor wrong conceyt of me in youre absence,
I wil nought be out of youre owne presénce,
But go with you, and come with you agayn."
The chambur dore, shortly for to sayn,
Thay opened and shutte, and wente forth their weye,

And forth with them they caryèd the keye,
And comen agayn withouten eny delay.
What shuld I tary al the longe day?
He took the chalk, and shope it in the wise
Of an ingot, as I shal you devyse;
I say, he took out of his owne sleeve
A bar of silver (evel mot he thrive!)
When silver was but of an unce of weight.
And take ye heed now of his cursed slight;
He shope his ingot in lengthe and eek in brede
Like to this bar, withouten eny drede;
So sleighly, that the prest it nought aspyde;
And in his sleeve agayn he gan it hyde;
And fro the fyr he took up his mateére,
And into the ingot put it with mery cheere;
And into the watir-vessel he it cast,
Whan that him list, and bad this prest as faste,
"Lok what there is; put in thin hond and grope;
Thou fynde ther some silver shalt, I hope."
What devel of helle shold it elsе be?
Shavyng of silver, silver is, pardee!
He putte his hond in and tok oute then
The silver fyn, and glad in every veyne
Was this prest, whan he saw that it was so.
"A! Goddes blessyng, and his modres also,
And alle saintes, have ye, sir canoún."
Seyde the prest, "and I their malisoun.
But, if ye vouchesauf to teche me
This nobil craft and this sobtilitee,
I wil be youre in al that ever I may."
Quoth this canoún, "Yet wil I make assay
The secound tyme, that ye may taken heede,
And be expert of this, and in your neede
Another day to assay in myn absence
This discipline, and this crafty science;
Let take another unce," quoth he tho,
"Of quyksilver, withouten wordes mo,
And do therwith as ye have doon er this
With that other, which that now silver is."
The prest him busyeth in al that he can
To do as this canoún, this cursed man,
Comaunded him, and faste blew the fyr,

Al for to come to theffect of his desyr.
And this canoún right in the mene-while
Al redy was this prest eft to bygile,
And for a countenaunce in his hond bar
An holow stikke (tak keep and be war),
In thende of which an unce and nothing more
Of silver metal put was, as bifore
Was in his cole, and stoppèd with wex wel
For to kepe in his metal every del.
And whil the prest was in his besynesse,
This canoun with his stikke gan him dresse
To him anon, and cast his pouder in,
As he dede ere, (the devel out of his skyn
Him turne, I pray to God, for his falshede!
For he was ever fals in word and deede).
And with this stikke above the crosselet,
That was y-made holow and counterfete,
He styred the coles, til to melt began
The wex agaynst the fyr, as every man,
But it a fool be, wot wel that it doth,
And al that in the hole was out goth,
And into the croslet hastily it fel.
Now, goode sirs, what wil ye better than wel?
Whan that this prest thus was begiled agayn,
Supposyng not but truthe, soth to sayn,
He was so glad, that I can nought expresse
In no maner his myrthe and his gladnesse,
And to the canoun profred he eft soone
Body and good. "Yea," quoth the canoun,
"soone,
Though pore I be, crafty thou shalt me fynde;
I warne thee, yet is ther more byhynde.
Is ther any coper herinne?" quoth he.
"Yea, sir," quoth this priest, "I trowe wel ther
be."
"Else go by thou some and that anon."
"Now I wil go, good sir, and bringe it soone."
He went his way, and cam with this coper;
And this canoun took in his hondes there,
And of that coper weyed out but an ounce.
Too simple is my tongue for to pronounce,
As minister of my witt, the doublenesse
Of this canoun, root of al cursednesse.

He semèd frendly to them that knew him nought,
But he was fiendly bothe in werk and thought.
It werieth me to telle of his falsnesse;
And nontheles yit wil I it expresse,
To that entent men may be war therby,
And for no other cause trewely.
He put this unce of coper in the crosselet,
And on the fyr at once he hath it set,
And cast in pouder, and made the prest to blowe,
And in his worching for to stoupe lowe,
As he dede ere, and al was but a jape;
Right as he list the prest he made his ape.
And afterward the ingot in he cast,
And in the panne putte it atte last
Of water, and in he put his owne hond.
And in his sleeve, as ye byforen-hond
Herd telle, the silver barre lay adoun;
He sleyghly took it out, this cursed canoún,
(Unwitynge this prest of his false craft),
And in the pannes botme he hath it laft;
And in the water feleth to and fro.
And wonder privily took up also
The coper barre, (nought knowyng this prest)
And hidde it, and then caught him by the brest,
And to him spak, and thus sayde in his game;
"Stoupe ye doun! by God, ye be to blame;
Helpe ye me now, as I dede you whil ere;
Put in your hond, and loke what is ther."
This prest took up this silver barre anon.
And thenne sayde the canoun, let us goon
With these thre barres whiche that we have wrought,
To som goldsmyth, and wit if it be ought.
For by my faith I wolde, for myn hood,
Be told that they were silver fyn and good,
And that at once provèd shal it be."
Unto the goldsmith with these barres three
Thay went, and putte these barres in assay
To fyr and hammer; might no man say nay
But that thay weren as they oughte be.
This sotted prest, who was gladder than he?
Was never brid gladder agayn the day;

Nor nightyngale in the sesoún of May
Was never noon, that liste better to synge;
Nor lady lustier in carolynge;
Or for to speke of love and wommanhede,
No knyght in armes to do an hardy deede
In hope to stonden in his lady grace,
Than hadde this prest this wikked craft to chace,
And to the canoun thus he spak and seyde;
" For the love of God, that for us alle deyde,
And as I may deserve it unto you,
What shal this réceyt coste? telle me now."
" By oure lady," quoth the canoun, " it is deere,
I warne you wel, for, save I and a freere,
In Engelond ther can no man it make."
" No care," quoth he; " now, sir, for Goddes sake,
What shal I paye? telle me, I pray."
" I-wis," quoth he, " it is ful dere I say.
Sir, at a word, if that ye lust it have,
Ye shul paye fourty pound, so God me save;
And but for frendshipe that ye dede ere this
To me, ye shulde paye more, i-wys."
This prest the somme of fourty pound anon
Of nobles fette, and took them every oon
To this canoún, for this cursèd receyt.
Al his werkyng was but fraude and deceyt.
" Sir prest," he seyde, " I wolde not that I lose
Aught of my craft, I wold it were kept close;
And as ye love me, kepe it secré.
For if men knewen al my sotiltee,
By God, men wolden have so gret envýe
To me, bycause of my philosophie,
I shulde be deed, ther were non other weye."
" God it forbede," he answerde, " what ye seye.
Yet had I rather spenden al the good
Which that I have, (and eke my herte blood)
Than that ye shulde fallen in such meschief."
" For your good wil, sir, have ye right good preef,"
Quoth the canoun, " and far wel *graunt mercy*."
He went his way, and never the prest him sey
After this day; and when that this prest sholde

Maken assay, at such tyme as he wolde,
Of this receyt, far wel, it wold not be.
Lo, thus byjapèd and biguiled was he;
Thus maketh he his introduccioun
To bringe folk to their destruccioun.
Consider, sirs, how that in ech astaat
Bitwixe men and gold ther is debaat,
So fer that golde scarce there is none.
This multiplying blindeth so many oon,
That in good faith I trowe that it be
The cause grettest of swich scarsetee.
Philosophres speken so mistyly
In this craft, that men conne not come therby,
For any witt that men have now on dayes.
They may wel chateren, as doon these jayes,
And in their termes sette lust and peyne,
But to their purpos shul thay never atteyne.
A man may lightly lerne, if he have ought,
To multiplie and bringe his good to nought.
Lo, such a lucre is in this lusty game;
A mannes mirthe it wil torne into shame.
And empte also the grete and hevy purses,
And maken folk to purchacen the curses
Of them, that have their good therto i-lent.
O, fy! for shame, thay that have ben brent,
Allas! can thay not flee the fyres hete?
Ye that it usen, I counsel ye it let,
Lest ye lose al; for bet than never is late;
Never to thrive, were too long a date.
Though ye prowl ay, ye shul it never fynde;
Ye be as bolde as hors which that is blynde,
He blundreth forth, and peril thinketh noon;
He is as blod to runne agaynst a stoon,
As for to go busides in the sey;
So fare ye that multiplie, I sey.
If that youre eyen can nought see aright,
Loke that youre mynde lakke nought his sight.
For though ye loke never so brode and stare,
Ye shul nought wynne a mite in that matére,
But al your gold and silver shal ye waste.
Withdrawe the fyr, lest it brenne too faste;
Medle no more with that art, I mene;
For if ye do, youre thift is gon ful clene.

And right as now I wil you tellen heere
What philosóphres sey in this mateére.
Lo, thus saith Arnold of the Newe-toun,
As his Rosárie maketh mencioun,
He saith right thus, withouten eny lye;
Ther may no man Mercúry mortifye,
But it be with his brother knowleching.
Lo, how that he, which that first sayd this thing,
Of philosóphres fader was Hermes;
He saith, how that the dragoun douteles
He dyeth nought, but-if that he be slayn
With his brother. And that is for to sayn,
By the dragoun, Mercúry, and noon other
He understood, and brimstoon be his brother,
That out of Sol and Luna were i-drawe.
"And therefore," sayde he, "take heed to my sawe;
Let no man besy him this art to seche,
But-if that he thentencioun and speche
Of philosóphres understonde can;
And if he do, he is a foolish man.
For this sciéns, and this connyng," quoth he,
"Is of the Secret of secrets, pardee."
Also ther was a disciple of Plato,
That on a tyme sayde his maister to,
As his book Senior wil bere witnesse,
And this was his demaunde in sothfastnesse:
"Tel me the name of thilke privy stoon."
And Plato answered unto him anon,
"Take the stoon that titanos men name."
"Which is that?" quoth he. "Magnasia is the same."
Sayde Plato. "Ye, sir, and is it thus?
That is *ignotum per ignotius*.
What is magnasia, good sir, I you pray?"
"It is a water that is maad, I say,
Of elementes foure," quoth Plato.
"Telle me the roote, good sir," quoth he tho,
"Of that water, if that it be your wille."
"Nay, nay," quoth Plato, "not with mine wil.
The philosóphres sworn were every oon,
That thay sholde not discovere it unto noon,
Nor in no book it write in no manére;

For unto Crist it is so leef and deere,
That he wil not that it discovered be,
But when it liketh to his deitee
Man to enspire, and eek for to defende
Whom that him liketh; lo, this is the ende."
Than thus conclude I, since God on high
Wil not that philosóphres signify,
How that a man shal come unto this stoon,
I counsel for the beste, let it goon.
For who-so maketh God his adversarie,
As for to werke a thing in contrarie
Unto his wil, certes shal never thrive,
Though that he multiplie through al his lyve.
And there a point: my tale is endid so
To each true man God sende wele for wo.

THE MAUNCIPLES TALE

Wit ye not where ther standeth a litel toun
Which that y-clepèd is Bob-up-and-doun,
Under the Blee in Caunterbury wey?
Ther gan our oste for to jape and pley,
And seyde, "Sirs, what! Dun is in the myre!
Is ther no man for preyer or for hyre,
That wil awake our felaw heer behinde?
A theef might him ful lightly robbe and binde
See how he nappeth. See for Goddes bones
As he wil falle from his hors at once.
Is that a cook of London, with mischaunce?
Let him com forth, he knoweth his penaúnce,
For he shal tell a tale by my fey
Although it be not worth a bottle of hey.
Awake, thou cook," quoth he, "God give thee scorn,
What eyleth thee to sleepen in the morn
So that thou mayst not holden up thin hed?"
This cook that was ful pale and nothing red
Seyde to our host, "So God my soule blesse,
Ther is yfallen on me such hevinesse
I know not why that I wold rather sleepe

Than drink the beste galon wyn in Chepe."
"Wel," quoth the Maunciple, "if it may do ese
To thee, Sir Cook, and to no wight displese,
Which that heer rydeth in this companye
And that our Host wil, of his curtesie,
So wil I now excuse thee of thy tale;
For, in good faith, thy visage is ful pale,
Thine eyen be dazèd eek as that me thinketh
And wel I wot thy breth ful soure stinketh,
That sheweth wel thou art not wel disposed.
Of me, certain, thou shalt not be y-glosed,
See how he yawneth, lo, this drunken wight,
As though he wolde us swallow anon right.
Hold close thy mouth, man, by my faders kin
The devil of helle sette his foot therein,
Thy cursed breth infecte wil us alle,
Fy, stinking swyn, fy! evil thee befal!
A! take good heed, sirs, of this lusty man,
Now, sweete sir, wil ye joust at the fan?
Thereto me thinketh ye be wel y-shape,
I trowe that ye have dronk the rype grape,
And that is when men playen with a fan."
And with this speche the cook in wrath began
Upon the Maunciple to nodde faste
For lakke of speche and doun the hors him caste,
Wher stil he lay til that men him up took;
This was a fayre rydyng for the Cook.
Alas! he hadde not held him by his ladel,
And ere that he agayn was in his saddle,
Ther was gret shovynge bothe to and fro
To lift him up and muche care and wo,
So unweldy was this sory pallid ghost,
And to the Maunciple thanne spak oure Host:
"Bycause that drink that dominacioun
Upon this man, by my salvacioun
I trow he lewedly wil tell his tale.
For were it wyn, or olde moysty ale,
That he hath dronk, he spekith in his nose,
And snesith fast, and eek he hath the pose.
He hath also to do more than ynough
To kepe him and his hors out of the slough,
And if he falle fro his hors eftsone,
Than shal we alle have ynough to doone

In liftyng up his hevy dronken neck.
Tel on thy tale, of him make I no reck.
But yit, Maunciple, in faith thou art too nyce,
Thus openly reprove him of his vice;
Another day he wil, par áventúre,
Chalénge the, and bring thee to his lure;
I mene, he speke wol of smale thinges,
As for to question of thy rekenynges,
That were not honest, if it cam to proof."
Quoth the Maunciple, "That were a gret mes-
chief:
So might he lightly bringe me in the snare,
Yit had I rather payen for the mare
He rideth on, than he shulde with me stryve.
I wil not wrath him, may I ever thrive!
That that I spak, I sayd a hasty word.
And wit ye what? I have heer in a gourd
A draught of wyn, yea of a ripe grape,
And right anon ye shal see a good jape.
This cook shal drinke thereof, if I may;
On peyn of deth he wol nought say me nay."
And certeinly, to tellen as it was,
Of this vessel the cook dronk fast, (allas!
What needith it? he drank ynough biforn);
And whan he hadde dronken from his horn,
To the Maunciple he took the gourd agayn.
And of that draught the Cook was wonder fayn,
And thankèd him in such wise as he coude.
Than gan our Host to laughe wonder loude,
And sayd, "I see wel it is necessarie
Wher that we go good drynk with us to carie;
For that wol torne rancour and desese
To accord and love, and many a wrong appese,
O thou Bacus, i-blessid be thi name,
That so canst tornen ernest into game!
Worship and thonke be to thy dietee;
Of that mater ye get no more of me.
Tel on thi tale, Mauncipel, I thee pray."
"Wel, sir," quoth he, "now herkyn what I say."

When Phebus duelther in this erthe adoun,
As olde bookes maken mencioún,
He was the moste lusty bachiler

Of al this world, and eek the best archér.
He slew Phiton the serpent, as he lay
Slepyng benethe the soonne upon a day;
And many another noble worthy dede
He with his bowe wrought, as men may rede.
Pleyen he coude on every mynstralcye
And syngen, that it was a melodye
To heren of his clere vois the sound.
Certes the kyng of Thebes, Amphioun,
That with his singyng builded that citee,
Coud never synge half so wel as he.
Bysides he was of all the semeliest man,
That is or was, since that the world bigan.
What nedith it his feature to descryve?
For in this worlde is noon so faire alyve.
He was therwith fulfild of gentilesse,
Of honour, and of parfyt worthinesse.

This Phebus, that was flour of bachelrie,
As wel in fredom, as in chivalrie,
For his disport, in signe of victorie
Of Phiton, so as telleth us the storie,
Was wont to beren in his hond a bowe.
Now had this Phebus in his hous a crowe,
Which in a cage he fostred many a day,
And taught it skeken, as men do a jay.
Whit was this crowe, as is a snow-whyt swan,
And countrefete the speche of every man
He coude, whan he shulde tell a tale.
Ther is withinne this world no nightingale
That coude by a thousandth part so wel
Singe so mery that it was mervaile.
Now had this Phebus in his hous a wyf,
Which that he lovèd more than his lif,
And night and day did evermor diligence
Hir for to please, and do hir reverence;
Save only, if the soth that I shal sayn,
Jalous he was, and wold have kept hir fayn,
For him were loth deceivèd for to be;
And so is every wight in such degree:
But al for nought for it availeth nought.
A good wyf, that is clene of werk and thought,
Schuld not be kept under no key certágn;
And trewely the labour is in vayn

To kepe a shrewe, for it wil nought be;
This hold I for a verray certainty,
To spille labour for to kepe wyves;
Thus olde clerkes writen in there lyves.
But now to purpos, as I first bigan.
This worthi Phebus doth al that he can
To pleasen hir, wenyng by such pleasánce,
And for his manhood and his governaúnce,
That no man shuld han put him fro hir loove.
But, God it woot, no man so strong can prove
As to destroy a thing, the which natúre
Hath naturelly set in a créatúre.
Tak any brid, and put him in a cage,
And do al thin entent, and thy coráge,
To foster it tenderly with mete and drynk,
And eek with alle the deyntees thou canst think,
And keep it al so kyndly as thou may;
Although his cage of gold be never so gay,
Yit hath this brid, by twenty thousand fold,
Far rather in a forest, wyld and cold,
Go eten wormes, and such wrecchidnes.
For ever this brid wil do his busyness
To scape out of his cage whan that he may;
His libertee the brid desireth aye.
Let take a cat, and foster him wel with mylk
And tender fleish, and mak his bed of silk,
And let him see a mous go by the wal,
Anon he wayveth mylk and fleish, and al,
And every deyntee which is in that hous,
Such appetit hath he to ete the mous.
Lo, heer hath nature his dominacioun,
And appetit will pass discrescioun.
Also a she wolf hath a vilayns kynde:
The lowest wolf of al that she may fynde,
Or lest of reputacioun, him wol she take
In tyme whan hir list to have a mate.
Alle these ensamples tel I for those men
That be untrewe; I speke not of wommen.
For men have ever a lecherous appetit
On lower thing to párforme there delit
Than on her wyves, be thayt never so faire,
Nor never so trewe, nor so debonaire.
Flesh is so fickel, God give it mischaunce,

That we can in no thinge have plesaúnce
That longeth unto vertu eny while.
This Phebus, which that thought upon no gile,
Deceyvèd was for al his jolitee;
For under him another hadde she,
A man of litil reputacioun,
Nought worth to Phebus in comparisoun.
Mor harm it is; it happeth ofte so;
Of which ther cometh bothe harm and wo.
And so bifel whan Phebus was absént,
His wif anon hath for hir lemman sent.
Her lemman? certes, this is a knavish speche;
Forgive it me, and that I you biseche.
The wise Plato saith, as ye may rede,
The word must neede accorde with the dede,
If men shal telle propurly a thing,
The word must wel accord with the thing
werkyng.
I am a boystous man, right thus say I;
There is no difference trewely
Bytwix a wyf that is of high degree,
If of hir body díshonést she be
And one the poorest wenche, other then this,
If so be that thay werke bothe amys,
But that the gentil in estat above
She shal be clepèd his lady as in love;
And, for that other is a pore womman,
She shal be cleped his wenche and his lemman;
And, God it wot, my goode lieve brother,
Men layn the one as lowe as lieth that other.
Right so betwixe a cruel gret tiraúnt
And an outlaw, or ese a thef erraúnt,
The same I say, there is no difference,
(To Alisaunder told was this senténce)
But, for the tiraunt is of greter might
By force of soldiers for to slay doun right,
And brenne hous and home, and make ruin,
Lo, therfor is he cleped a capitayn;
And, for an outlawe hath but soldiers few,
And not so gret distruccioún may do,
Nor bringe a contree to so gret meschief,
Men clepen him an outlawe or a theef.
But, for I am a man not texted wel,

I will to you no more ensaumples tel;
I wol go to my tale, as I bigan.
Whan Phebus wyf hadde sent for hir lemman,
Anon thay wroughten al her stelthy love.
This white crow, that hung in cage above,
Bihild there werk, and sayde never a word.
And whan that hom was come Phebus the lord,
This crowe sang, "Cuckow, cuckow, cuckow!"
"What? brid," quod Phebus, "what song singest thou?
Never were thou wont to merily to synge,
But to myn hert it was a réjoysýnge
To here thi vois? allas! what song is this?"
"By God," quoth he, "I synge not amys.
Phebus," quoth he, "for al thy worthyness,
For al thy beautee and thy gentiless,
For alle thy songes, and thy menstralcie,
For al thy watching, blinded is thin eye,
By one of litel reputacioun,
Nought worth to thee as in comparisoun
The value of a gnat, so may I thrive;
For on thy bed thy wif I saw him swyve."
What wil ye more? the crowe anon him tolde,
By sadde tokens, and by wordes bolde,
How that his wyf had doon hir treacherie,
Him to gret shame, and to gret vilonye;
And told him oft he saw it with his ee.
This Phebus gan away-ward for to flee;
He thought would brast in tuo this sorrowful herte.
His bowe he bent, and sett therin a dart;
And in his ire he hath his wif i-slain;
This is theffect, ther is no more to sayn.
For sorrow of which he brak his menstralcye,
Bothe harp and lute, cithern and psalterie;
And eek he brak his arwes, and his bowe;
And after that thus spak he to the crowe;
"Traytour," quoth he, "with tunge of scorpioún,
Thou hast me brought to my confusioún;
Allas that I was born! why not be deed?
O dere wyf, O gemme of lustyhed,
That were to me so stedfast and so trewe,

Now liest thou deed, with face pale of hewe,
Ful gulteles, that dorst I swere i-wis.
O hasty hond, to do so foule amys.
O troubled wit, O ire rekkeless,
That unavysèd smytest gulteless.
O wantrust, ful of fals suspeccioun,
Wher was thy wit and thy discrecioun?
O, every man be war of hastiness,
Nor trowe no thing withoute gret witnesse.
Smyt nought too soone, ere that thou wite why,
And be avysèd wel and sobrely,
Ere ye do eny execucioun
For al your wrath uppon suspeccioun.
Allas! a thousand folk hath hasty ire
Fordon, ere Dun hath brought them in the myre.
Allas! for sorrow I wil myselven slay."
And to the crowe, "O false theef," sayd he,
"I wyl thee quyt anon thy false tale.
Thow song whilom as any nightyngale,
Now shalt thou, false thef, thy song have done,
And eek thy white fetheres, everi one,
Nor never in al thy lyf shalt thou more speke;
Thus shal men on a fals theef vengeaunce wreke.
Thou and thin ofspring ever shal be blake,
Nor never sweete noyse shal ye make,
But ever crye before tempest and rayn,
In tokenyng that thurgh thee my wyf was slayn."
And to the crowe he stert, and that anon,
And puld his white fetheres every one,
And made him blak, and reft from him his song,
And eek his speche, and out at dore him slong
Unto the devel, to which I him bytake;
And for this cause he alle crowes blake.
Lordyngs, by this ensample, I you pray,
Be war, and take kepe what ye say;
Nor telle never man in al youre lif,
How that another man hath loved his wyf;
He wol you haten mortelly certeyn.
Dan Salamon, as wise clerkes seyn,
Techeth a man to kepe his tonge wel.
But, as I sayd, I am not texted wel;
But natheles thus taughte me my dame;
"My sone, thenk on the crowe, in Goddes name.

My son, keep wel thy tonge, and kep thy frend;
A wicked tonge is worse than a feend;
My sone, fro a feend men may them free,
My sone, God of his endless charitee
Wallid a tonge with teeth, and lippes eek
That man shal him avyse what he speek
My sone, ful ofte by too moche speche
Hath many a man ben spilt, as clerkes teche;
But for a litil speche advisedly
Is no man spilt, to speke generally.
My sone, thy tonge sholdest thou restreine
At alle tyme, save whan thou dost thy peyne
To speke of God in honour and prayére.
The firste vertue, sone, if thou wilt here,
Is to restreine and kepe wel thy tonge;
Thus lerne children, whan that thay be yonge.
My sone, of moche speking evel avised,
When lasse speking had ynough suffised,
Cometh moche harm; thus was me told and taught;
In moche speche synne wantith nought.
Knowest thou whereto a hasty tonge serveth?
Right as a swerd for-kutteth and for-carveth
An arm a-two, my dere sone, right so
A tonge cutteth frendship al a-two.
A jangler is to God abhominable.
Rede Salamon, so wys and honourable.
Rede David in his Psalmes, rede Senek.
My sone, spek not, but with thy heed do beck,
Dissemble as thou were deef, if that thou heere
A jangler speke of peritous mateére.
The Flemyng saith, and learn it at the best.
That litil jangling causeth more rest.
My sone, if thou no wikked word hast sayd,
Thou shalt not drede for to be betrayed;
But he that hath myssayd, I dar wel sayn,
He may be no way call his word agayn.
Thing that is sayd is sayd, and forth it goth,
Though him repent, or be him never so loth,
He is his thral, to whom that he hath sayd
A tale, for which he is now yvel repaid.
My sone, be war, and be no author newe

Of tydyngs, whether thay be fals or trewe;
Wher-so thou comest, amonges hy or lowe,
Kep wel thy tonge, and thenk upon the crowe.

THE PERSONES TALE

By that the Maunciple had his tale endid,
The sonne fro the south line is descendid
So lowe, that it was nought to my sight
Degrees nyne and twenty as in hight.
Foure on the clokke it was, so as I gesse,
For eleven foote, or litil more or lesse,
My shadow was at thilk tyme of the yere,
Of which feet as my lengthe parted were
In sixe feet equal of proporcioun:
Therwith the mones exaltacioun,
In mena Libra, alway gan ascende,
As we were entryng at a cownes ende.
For which our Host, as he was wont to gye,
As in this case, our joly compainye,
Sayd in this wise: "Lordyngs, every one,
Now lakketh us no tales mo than oon,
Fulfillèd is my sentens and decré;
I trowe that we have herd of ech degré
Almost fulfillèd is myn ordynaunce;
I pray to God so geve him right good chaunce,
That tellith to us his tale lustily.
Sir prest," quoth he, "art thou a vicary?
Or art a parsoun? say soth, by thy fay.
Be what thou be, breke thou nought oure play;
For every man, save thou, hath told his tale.
Unbocle, and tell us one withoute faile,
For trewely me thinketh by thy chier,
Thou sholdist wel knyt up a gret matier.
Tel us a fable anon, for Goddes sake!"
This Persoun to oure oste quikly spake:
"Thou getist fable noon i-told for me,
For Poul, that writeth unto Timothé,
Repreveth them that flee fro sothfastnesse,
And tellen fables, and such wrecchednesse.

Why shuld I sowen chaff out of my fist,
Whan I may sowe whete, and that the best?
For which I say, if that you list to here
Moralité and vertuous matére,
And thanne that ye wil give me audience,
I wil ful fayn at Cristis reverence
Do you plesaunce lawful, as I can.
But truste wel, I am a suthern man,
I can not jeste, 'rum-rum-ruf,' by letter,
And, God wot, ryme I hold but litel better.
And therfor, if you list, I wol not glose,
I wol you telle a litle tale in prose,
To knyt up al this fest, and make an ende;
And Jhesu for his grace wit me sende
To shewe you the way, in this voyáge,
Of thilke parfyt glorious pilgrimage
That highte Jerusalem celestial.
And if ye vouchesauf, anon I shal
Bygynne my tale, for which I you pray
Pardon of al, I can no better say.
But natheles, this meditacioun
I put it ay under correccioun
Of clerkes, for I am not textuel;
I take but the sentens, truste wel.
Therfor I make protestacioun,
That I wil stonde to correccioun."

Upon this word we have assented soone,
For, as it semèd, it was for to done,
To enden in som vertuous ennténce,
And for to geve him space and audience;
And bad oure Host he shulde to him say,
That alle we to telle his tale him pray.
Our host the wordes hadde for us alle;
"Sir prest," quoth he, "now faire you bifalle;
Say what you list, and we wil gladly here."
And with that word he said in this manere;
"Telle," quoth he, "your meditacioun;
But haste you, the sonne wil adoun.
Be fructuous, and that in litel space,
And to do wel God sende you his grace."

Jer. 6°. *State super vias, et videte et interrogate de semitis antiquis quæ sit via bona, et ambulate in eâ, et invenietis refrigerium animabus vestris, etc.*

OWRE swete Lord God of heven, that no man wil perische, but wol that we comen alle to the knowleche of him, and to the blisful lif that is durable, admonisheth us by the prophet Jeremye, that saith in this wise: Stond upon the weyes, and see the axe of olde pathes, that is to sayn, of old sentence, which is the good way, and walk in that weie, and ye shul fynde refresshyng for youre soules, etc. Many be the wayes spirituels that leden folk to oure Lord Jhesu Christ, and to the regne of glorie; of whiche weyes, ther is a ful noble way, and ful convenient, which may not faile to man nor to womman, that thrugh synne hath mysgon fro the righte way of Jerusalem celestial; and this wey is cleped penitence. Of which men shulden gladly herken and enquere with al there herte, to wyte what is penitence, and whens it is cleped penitence, and in what maner, and in how many maneres been the actiones or workynges of penaunce, and how many species be of penitences, and whiche thinges apperteyne and byhoven to penitence, and whiche thinges destourben penitence.

Seint Ambrose saith, that penitence is the pleynyng of man for the gilt that he hath doon, and no more to do ony thing for which he ought to pleyn. And som doctour saith, penitence is the lamentynge of man that sorweth for his synne, and peyneth himself for he hath mysdoon. Penitence, with certeyn circumstaunces, is verray repentaunce of man, that holdeth himself in sorwe and in wo for his giltes; and for he shal be verray penitent, he shal first bywaile the synnes that he hath do, and stedfastly purpose in his hert to have schrifte of mouth, and to doon satisfaccioun, and never to do thing for which he oughte more to bywayle or to complayne, and to continue in goode werkes, or elles his repentaunce may nought avayle. For, as saith saint Isidre, he is a japere and a gabbere, and no verray repentaunt, that eftsoone doth thing for which he oughte to repente. Wepynge, and nought for to stynte to doon synne, may nought avayle. But natheles, men shal hope that at every tyme that man fallith, be it never so ofte, that he may arise thrugh penitence, if he have grace; but certeyn it is a gret doute. For as saith

seint Gregory, scarcely ariseth he out of his synne that is charged with the charge of yvel usage. And therfore repentaunt folk that stinte for to synne, and leave synne er that synne leaves them, holy chirche holdeth them sure of their salvacioun. And he that synneth, and verraily repentith him in his last ende, holy chirche yit hopeth his salvacioun, by the grete mercy of oure Lord Jhesu Crist, for his repentaunce; but take ye the sure way.

And now sith that I have declared yow, what thing is penitence, now shul ye understonde, that ther be thre actiouns of penitence. The first is, that if a man be baptized after that he hath synned. Seint Augustyn saith unless he be penitent for his olde synful lif, he may not bygynne the newe clene lif. For certes, if he be baptized withoute penitence of his olde gilt, he receyveth the mark of baptisme, but nought the grace, ne the remissioun of his synnes, til he have repentaunce verray. Another defaute is this, that men do deedly synne after that thay have receyved baptisme. The thridde defaute is, that men fallen into venial synne after there baptisme fro day to day. Therof saith seint Austyn, that penitence of goode men, and of humble folk, is the penitens of every day.

The species of penitence be thre. That oon of them is solemne, another is comune, and the thridde is pryvé. Thilke penaunce that is solemne, is in tuo maners; as is to be put out of holy chirche in lente, for slaughtre of childre, and such maner thing. Another is, whan a man hath synned openly, of which synne the fame is openly spoken in the contré; and thanne holy chirche by judgement streyneth him to do upon penaunce. Comune penaunce is, that prestes enjoynen men comunly in certeyn caas, as for to goon, peradventure, naked in pilgrimage, or barfot. Privé penaunce is thilk that men doon alday for privé synnes, of whiche we schryve us prively, and receyven privé penaunce.

Now shalt thou understonde what bihoveth and is necessarie to verray parfyt penitence; and this stondith in thre thinges, contricioun of hert, confessioun of mouth, and satisfaccioun. For whiche saith seint Johan Crisostom, penitence distreyneth a man to accepte benignely every peyne that him is enjoyned with contricioun of herte, and schrift of mouth, with satisfaccioun, and in werking of alle maner of humility. And this is fruytful penitence agayn tho thre thinges, in which we anger oure Lord Jhesu Crist; this is to

sayn, by delit in thinking, by recklessness in speking, and by wicked synful werkyng. Against these thre wickid giltes is penitence, that may be likned unto a tre.

The roote of this tre is contricioun, that hydith him in the hert of him that is verray repentaunt, right as the roote of a tree hidith him in the earthe. Of the roote of contricioun springeth a stalk, that bereth braunches and leeves of confessioun and fruyt of satisfaccioun. For whiche Crist saith in his Gospel, do fruyt worthy of penitence, for by this fruyt may men knowe this tree, and nought by the roote that is hyd in the hert of a man, nor by the braunches nor the levys of confessioun. And therfore oure Lord Jhesu Christ saith thus, by the fruyt of them shul ye knowe them. Of this roote eek springeth a seed of grace, the which seed is moder of safety, and this seed is egre and hote. The grace of this seed springeth of God, thrugh remembraunce of the day of doom, and of the peynes of helle. Of this matier saith Salomon, that in the drede of God man forleteth his synne. The hete of this seed is the love of God and the desiring of the joye durable. The hete draweth the hert of man to God, and maketh him hate his synne. For sothe, ther is nothing that serveth so wel to a child, as the mylk of his nurse, nor nothing is to him more abominable than the milk whan it is mingled with othere mete. Right so the synful man that loveth his synne, thinketh it is to him most swete of eny thing; but fro that tyme that he loveth firmly oure Lord Jhesu Crist, and desireth the lif durable, ther is to him nothing more abominable. For sothly the lawe of God is the love of God. For which Davyd saith, I have loved thy lawe, and hated wikkednesse and hate; he that loveth God, keepeth his lawe and his word. This tree saw the prophete Daniel in spirit, upon the visioun of Nabugodonosor, whan he counseiled him to do penaunce. Penaunce is tre of lif to them that it receyve; and he that holdeth him in verray penitence, is blessed, after the sentence of Salomon.

In this penitence or contricioun men shal understonde foure thinges, that is to sayn, what is contricioun, and whiche be the causes that move men to contricioun, and how he shulde be contrit, and what contricioun availeth to the soule. Thanne it is thus, that contricioun is the verray sorwe that a man receyveth in his herte for his synnes, with firm purpos to shryve him, and to do penaunce, and never more to do synne. And this sorwe shal be in this maner, as saith seint

Bernard; it shal be hevy and grevous, and ful sharp and poynaunt in herte; first, for man hath sinned against his Lord and his creatour; and more sharp and poynaunt, for he hath sinned against his fader celestial; and yit more sharp and poynaunt, for he hath wratthed and sinned against him that bought him with his precious blood, and hath delyvered us fro the bondes of synne, and fro the cruelté of the devel, and fro the peynes of helle.

The causes that ought to move a man to contricioun be vj. First a man shal remembre him of his synnes. But loke that thilke remembraunce be to no delyt of him by no way, but gret shame and sorwe for his gilt. For Job saith that synful men do werkes worthy of confessioun. And therfor saith Ezechiel, I wol remembre me alle the yeres of my lyf, in bitternesse of myn herte. And God saith in the Apocalypse, Remembre yow from whens that ye be fallen, for biforn that tyme that ye synned, ye were the children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of God; but for youre synne ye be woxe thral, and foul, and membres of the feend, hate of aungels, slaunder of holy chirche, and foode of the false serpent, perpetual mater of the fyr of helle, and yet more foule and abominable, for ye trespass so ofte tyme, as doth the hound that torneth to ete his spewyng; and yet ye be fouler for youre longe continuyng in synne, and youre synful usage, for whiche ye be roten in youre synne, as a beest in his donge. Suche maner of thoughtes make a man have shame of his synne, and no delit; and God saith, by the prophete Ezechiel, ye shul remembre yow of youre weyes, and thay shal displese yow. Sothly, synnes ben the wayes that leden folk to helle.

The secounde cause that oughte to make a man to have disdeyn of his synne is this, that, as seith seint Petre, who so doth synne, is thral of synne, and synne putteth a man in gret thraldom. And therfore saith the prophete Ezechiel, I wente sorwful, in disdeyn of myself. Certes, wel oughte a man have disdeyn of synne, and withdrawe him fro that thraldom and vilonye. And lo what saith Seneca in this matiere? He saith thus, though I wiste, that neythere God ne man shulde never knowe it, yit wold I have disdeyn for to do synne. And the same Seneca also saith, I am born to gretter thinges than to be thral to my body, or than for to make of my body a thral. No fouler thral may no man, ne womman, make of his body, than yive his body to synne.

And were it the foulest cherl, or the foulest womman, that lyveth, and lest of value, yet is he chaunged thanne by synne and more foul, and more in servitude. Ever fro the higher degre that man fallith, the more he is thral, and more unto God and to the werlde, vile and abominable. O goode God! wel oughte a man have gret disdayn of such a thing that thrugh synne, when he was free, now is he maked bonde. And therfore saith seint Austyn, if thou hast disdayn of thy servaunt, if he sin against thee, have thou than disdeine that thou thiself shuldist doon synne. Tak reward of thy value, that thou be nought too foul in thiself. Allas! wel oughte men have disdeyn to be servauntes and thralles to synne, and sore be ashamed of themself, that God of his endeles goodnes hath set them in high estate, or geven hem witte, strength of body, helth, beauté, or prosperité, and bought them fro the deth with his herte blood, that thay so unkindely ageinst his gentilesse quyten him so vileynsly, to slaughter of their oune soules. O goode God! ye wommen that ben of so gret beauté, remembre yow of the proverbe of Salamon, that saith he likeneth a fair womman, that is a fool with hir body, to a ryng of gold that were in the groyn of a sowe; for right as a sowe walloweth in everich ordure, so rolleth she hir beauté in stynkyng ordure of synne.

The thridde cause, that oughte move a man to contricioun, is drede of the day of doome, and of the orrible peynes of helle. For as seint Jerom saith, at every tyme that I remembre me of the day of doom, I quake; for whan I ete or drinke, or what so that I do, ever semeth me that the trompe sowneth in myn eere, Rise ye up that be deede, and come to the judgement. O goode God! moch ought a man to drede such a judgement, where we shul be alle, as saith seint Poul, biforn the sete of our Lord Jhesu Crist; wher he shal make a general congregacioun, wher no man may be absent; for certes ther avayleth non excusacioun; and nought oonly, that oure defaute shal be judged, but eek that alle oure werkes shul be openly knowen. And, as seint Bernard saith, ther shal no pleynyng avayle, nor no sleight; we shuln yive rekenyng of every ydel word. Ther shulle we have a judge that may nought be disceyved nor corrupt; and why? for certes, alle oure thoughtes be descovered as to him, nor for prayer nor for meede he wil not be corupt. And therfore saith Salamon, the wrath of God wol nought spare no wight, for praier nor for gifte. And therfore at the day of

doom ther is noon hope to escape. Wherfore, as seint Anselm seith, ful greet anguish shul the synful folk have at that tyme; there shal be the sterne and the wroth judge sitte above, and under him the horrible pit of helle open, to destroye him that wolde not acknowledge his synnes, which synnes openly be shewed biforn God and biforn every creature; and on the lift syde, more divelis than herte may thynke, for to harry and to drawe the synful soules to the pyne of helle; and withinne the hertes of folk shal be the bytyng conscience, and withoute shal be the world al brennyng. Whider shal thanne the wrecched synful man flee to hyden him? Certes he may not hyden him, he moot come forth and shewe him. For certes, as seith seynt Jerom, the erthe shal caste him out, and the see also, and the aer also, that shal be ful of thunder-clappes and lightnynges. Now sothly, who-so wel remembrith him of these tydynges, I gesse his synne shal not torne him to delit, but to gret sorw, for drede of the peyne of helle. And therfor saith Job to God, suffre, Lord, that I may a while biwayle and wepe, ere I go withoute retournynge to the derke lond, covered with derknes of deth, to the lond of mysese and of derknesse, wher is the shadow of deth, wher as is noon order nor ordinaunce, but grisly drede that ever shal laste. Lo, here may ye see, that Job prayde respit a while, to wepe and biwayle his trespas; for forsothe oon day of respit is bettre than al the tresor in this world. And for as moche as a man may aquyte himself byforn God by penaunce in this world, and not by tresor, therfore schuld he praye to God yive him respit a while, to wepe and to waile his trespas. For certes, al the sorwe that a man myht make fro the begynnynge of the werld, is but a litel thing, in regard of the sorwe of helle. The cause why that Job calleth helle the lond of derknes, understond, that he clepith it lond or earthe, for is it stable and never shal fayle; and derk, for he that is in helle hath defaut of light material; for certes the derke light that shal come out of the fyr that ever shal brenne, shal torne him to peyne that is in helle, for it shewith him to thorrible develes that him tormenten. Covered with the derknes of deth; that is to sayn, that he that is in helle, shal have defaulte of the sight of God; for certes the sight of God is the lif durable. The derknes of deth be the synnes that the wrecchid man hath doon, whiche that distourben him to see the face of God, right as a derk cloude doth bitwixe us and the sonne. Lond of myseyse;

bycause that there ben thre maner of defaultes against thre thinges that folk of this world have in this present lif, that is to sayn, honures, delices, and richesses. Agayns honours have they in helle shame and confusioun; for wel ye wit, that men clepyn honure the reverence that men doon to the man; but in helle is noon honour nor reverence; for certes no more reverence shal ben doon ther to a kyng, than to a knave. For which God saith by the prophete Jeremie, thilke folk that me displesen, shul be in despit. Honour is eke cleped gret lordshipe. There shal no wight serven othir, but with harm and of torment. Honour eek is cleped gret dignité and highnes; but in helle shulle thay be al trod by develes. And God saith, thorrible develes shuln goon and comen upon the hedes of damned folk; and this is, for as moche as the higher that thay were in this present lif, the more shuln thay be abatid and defouled in helle. Agayns riches of this world shuln they han mysese of poverty, and this poverty shal be in iiij. thinges: in default of tresor; of which, as David saith, the riche folk that embrased and owned in al here herte the tresor of this world, shuln slepen in the slepyng of deth, and nothing shuln thay fynde in their hondes of al their tresor. And moreover, the mysease of helle shal be in the default of mete and drink. For God saith thus by Moyses, thay shul be wasted by hunger, and the briddes of helle shuln devoure them with bittir teeth, and the galle of the dragoun shal be their drink, and the venym of the dragoun there morsels. And forther-moreover their misease shal be in default of clothing, for thay shul be naked in body, as of clothing, save of fyr in which thay brenne, and other filthis; and naked shuln thay be of soule, of alle maner vertues, which that is the clothing of the soule. Wher be thanne the gaye robes, and the softe sheetis, and the smale shirtes? Lo, what saith of them the prophete Isaye, under them shuln be strawed motthis, and there covertours shuln ben of worms of helle. And forther-morover there disease shal be in defaulte of frendes, for he is not poor that hath goode frendes; but there is no frend, for neyther God ne no creature shal be frend unto them, and everich of them shal hate other with dedly hate. The sones and the doughtres shuln rebellen agaynst the fader and the moder, and kyndrede agyanst kyndrede, and chiden and despisen everich of them other, bothe day and night, as God saith by the prophete Michas, and the lovyng children that whilom loveden

so fleshly everych other wolden everych of them eten other if thay mighten. For how shulden thay loven them togider in the peyne of helle, whan thay hated everich of them other in the prosperité of this lif? For trust wel, their flesshly love was dedly hate; as saith the prophete David, who-so that loveth wickidnes, he hateth his soule, and who-so hatith his oune soule, certis he may love noon other wight in no manere. And therfore in helle is no solace nor frendshipe, but ever the more flesshly kyndredes that be in helle, the more cursynge, the more chydynges, and the more deedly hate ther is among hem. And fortherover thay shul have defaulte of alle manere delices; for certis delices ben the appetites of thy fyve wittes; as sight, hieryng, smellyng, savoring, and touching. But in helle there sight shal be ful of derknes and of smoke, and there eyen therfore ful of teeris; and their hieryng ful of lamentynge, and of grantynge of teeth, as saith Jhesu Crist, their nostrils shuln ben ful of stynkyng stynk; and, as saith Ysaye the prophete, their savoringe shal be ful of bitter galle; and for touchyng, al their body shal be y-covered with fuyr, that never shal quenche, and with wormes that never shuln deyen, as God saith by the mouth of Ysaie. And for al so moche as thay shuln nought think that thay may deyen for peyne, and by their deth fle fro peyne, that may thay understonde in the word of Job, that saith, ther as is the shadow of deth. Certes a shadow hath the liknesse of the thing of which it is a shadow, bot the shadowe is nouht the same thinge of whiche it is shadowe; right so fareth the peyne of helle; it is lik deth, for the horrible anguissh; and why? for it peyneth them ever as though men sholden deye anon; but certes thay shul not deye. For as saith seint Gregory, to wrecchid caytifs shal be give deth withoute deth, and ende withouten ende, and defaulte withouten faylinge; for there deth shal alway lyven, and there ende shal evermore bygynne, and there defaulte shal not fayle. And therfor saith seint Johan the Evaungelist, thay shul folwe deth, and thay shuln nought fynde him, and thay shul desire to deyen, and deth shal flee fro them. And eek Job saith, that in helle is noon ordre of rule. And al be it that God hath created al thing in right ordre, and no thing withoute ordre, but alle thinges be ordeyned and noumbred, yit natheles thay that be damned been nought in ordre, nor holden no ordre. For the earthe shal beré them no fruyt; (for, as the prophete David saith,

God shal destroye the fruyt of the earthe, as for them) nor watir shal give them no moysture, nor the aier no refreisching, nor fyr no light. For as seith seint Basile, the brennyng of the fyr of this world shal God give in helle to them that ben damnyd, but the light and the clerness shal be geven in hevene to his children; right as the goode man geve fleish to his children, and bones to his houndes. And for thay shul have noon hope to escape, saith seint Job, atte laste, that ther shal horrour and grisly drede duelle withouten ende. Horrour is alway drede of harm that is to come, and this drede shal ever duelle in the hertes of them that ben damnyd. And therfore have thay lost al their hope for vij. causes. First, for God that is there judge shal be withoute mercy on them, nor thay may not please him, nor soon of his saintes; nor they may give no thing for there raunsoun; nor thay have no voice to speke to him; nor thay may not fle fro peyne; nor thay have no goodnes in them that thay may shewe to deliver them fro peyne. And therfore saith Salamon, the wikked man deyeth, and whan he is deed, he shal have noon hope to escape fro peyne. Who-so wolde thanne wel understonde these peynes and bythynke him wel that he hath deserved thilke peynes for his synnes, certes he shulde have more talent to be sick and to wepe, than for to synge or pleye. For as that Salamon saith, Who-so that hadde the science to knowe the peynes that ben establid and ordeynt for synne he wolde make sorwe. Thilke science, as saith seint Austyn, maketh a man to lament in his herte.

The fourthe poynt, that oughte make a man have contricioun, is the sorwful remembraunce of the good that he hath left to doon heer in earthe, and eek the good that he hath lost. Sothly the goode werkes that he hath lost, eyther thay been the goode werkes that he wrought ere he fel into deedly synne, or elles thai ben the goode werkes that he hath wroughte whil he laie in synne. Sothely the gode werkes that he dede ere he fel into synne ben destroyed, and astoneyed, and dullid by ofte synnynge; that othere goode werkes that he wroughte whil he lay in dedly synne, been utterly deede, as to the lif durable in heven.

Thanne thilke goode werkes that ben mortified by ofte synnyng, whiche goode werkes he dede whiles he was in charité, may never quyken agayn withouten verray penitence. And thereof saith God by the mouth of Ezechiel that if the rightful man tourne agayn fro his rightwisnesse and werke

wikkednesse, shal he live? nay; for alle the goode werkes that he hath wrought, shuln never be in remembrance, for he shal dye in his synne. And upon thilke chapitre saith seint Gregory thus, that we shuln understonde this principally, that whan we doon dedly synne, it is for nought thanne to reherse or to drawe into memorie the goode werkes that we have wrought biforn; for certis in the werkyng of the dedly synne, ther is no trust to no good werkes that we han don biforne this tyme; that is to say, as for to have therby the lif durable in heven. But natheles, the goode werkes quiken agayn and comen again, and helpen and availen to have the lif durable in heven whan we have contricioun; but sothly the goode werkes that men doon whil that thai ben in deedly synne, for as moche as thay were doon in dedly synne, thay may never quyken ayeine. For certes, thinge that never hadde lif, may never quicken; and al be it so that thay availen not to have the lif durable, yit avaylen thay to abridging of the peyne of helle, or elles to gete temporal riches, or elles that God wol the rather enlumyne and lightene the hert of the synful man to have repentaunce; and eek thay availen for to usen a man to do goode werkes, that the feend have the lesse power of his soule. And thus the curteys Lord Jhesu Crist wolde nought no good werk be lost, for in somwhat it shal availe. But for als moche as the goode werkes that men don whil thay ben in good lif ben destroyed by synne folwyng, and eek sith that alle the goode werkes that men doon whil thay ben in dedly synne, been utterly deede as for to have the lif durable, wel may that man that no goode werkes werkith synge thilke newe Frenshe song, *Jay tout perdu moun temps et moun labour*. For certis synne byreveth a man bothe of goodnes of nature, and eek of the goodnes of grace. For sothly the grace of the holy gost fareth lik fyre that may not ben ydel; for fyr as it forletith its werkyng, it faileth anoon, and right so when the grace faileth than losith the synful man the goodnes of glorie, that oonly is byhight to goode men that labouren and werken. Wel may be he sory thanne, that oweth al his lif to God, as longe as he hath lyved, and eek as longe as he shal lyve, that no goodnes hath to paye with his dette to God, to whom he oweth al his lyf; for trust wel he shal give accompt, as saith seint Bernard, of alle the goodes that have been geven him in his present lif, and how he hath them dispendid, nat so moche that ther shal not perische an

heer of his heed, nor a moment of an hour shal not perische of his tyme, that he shal not yive of it a rekenyng.

The fifte maner of contricioun, that moveth a man therto, is the remembraunce of the passioun that oure Lord Jhesu Crist suffred for us and for oure synnes. For as seith seint Bernard, whil that I lyve, I shal have remembraunce of the passioun that oure Lord Jhesu Crist suffred for us in preching, his werynesse in travayling, his temptacioun whan he fastid, his longe wakinges whan he prayde, his teeres whan he wepte for pité of good peple; the wo and the shame and the filthe that men saide to him; of the foule spittyng that men spitten on his face; of the buffettis that men gaf him; of the foule mocks and of the reproves that men to him saiden; of the nayles with whiche he was nayled to the cros, and of al the remenaunt of his passioun, that he suffrede for my synnes and no thing for his owne gilt. And ye shal understonde that in mannes synne is every maner ordre of ordinaunce turned up-so-doun. For it is soth, that God, and resoun, and sensualité, and the body of man, be so ordeyned, that everich of thise foure thinges shulde have lordshipe over that other, as thus: God sholde have lordschip over resoun, and resoun over sensualité, and sensualité over the body of man. But sothly whan man synneth, al this ordre, or ordinaunce, is torned up-so-doun; and thanne, for as moche as the resoun of a man wol not be subject nor obeissant to God, that is his lord by right, therfore losith it the lordshipe that it shulde have over sensualité, and eek over the body of man; and why? for sensualité rebellith thanne agayns resoun; and by that way losith resoun the lordshipe over sensualité, and over the body. For right as resoun is rebel to God, right so is bothe sensualité rebel to resoun and the body also. And certis this disordynaunce, and this rebellioun, oure Lord Jhesu Crist bought upon his precious body ful deere; and herken in which wise. For as moche as resoun is rebel to God, therfore is man worthy to have sorwe, and to be deed. This suffred oure Lord Jhesu Crist for man, after that he was bytrayed of his disciple, and distreyned and bounde, so that blood brast out at every nayl of his hondes, as saith seint Austyn. And fortherover, for as moch as resoun of man wol nought conquer sensualité whan it can, therfore is man worthy to have shame; and this suffered oure Lord Jhesu Crist for man, whan thay spitten in his face. And fortherover thanne, for as moche

as the caytif body of man is rebelle bothe to resoun and to sensualité, therfore it is worthy the deth; and this suffred oure Lord Jhesu Crist for us upon the cros, wher ther was no part of his body fre, withoute gret peyne and bitter passioun. And al this suffred oure Lord Jhesu Crist that never forfeted; and thus sayd he, too moche am I streyned, for the thinges that I never deservyd; and too moche defouled for shame that man is worthy to have. And therfore may the synful man wel seye, as saith seint Bernard, acursed be the bitternesse of my sinne, for which ther muste be suffered so muche bitternes. For certis, after the dyvers discordaunces of oure wickednes was the passioun of oure Lord Jhesu Crist ordeyned in divers thinges; as thus. Certis sinful mannes soule is bytrayid of the devel, by coveitise of temporal prosperité; and scorned by disceyt, whan he chooseth fleishly delytes; and yit is it tormentid by impacience of adversité, and byspit by servage and subjeccioun of synne, and atte last it is slayn finally. For this discordaunce of synful man, was Jhesu Crist first bytraied; and after was he bounde, that com for to unbynden us fro synne and of peyne. Than was he scorned, that only shulde be honoured in alle thing of alle thinges. Than was his visage, that oughte be desired to be seyn of al mankynde (in which visage aungels desiren to loke) vileynously byspit. Thanne was he scourged that nothing had done; and fynally, thanne was he crucified and slayn. Thanne was accomplished the word of Ysaye, he was woundid for oure mysdede, and defouled by oure felonyes. Now, sith Jhesu Crist tok upon him thilke peyne of alle oure wikkednes, moch oughte synful men wepe and bywale, that for his synnes shulde Goddes sone of hevene al this endure.

The sixte thing that oughte to move a man to contricioun, is the hope of thre thinges, that is to sayn, forgevenes of synne, and the gifte of grace wel for to do, and the glorie of heven, with which God shal guerdon man for his goode deedis. And for as moche as Jhesu Crist geveth us these giftes of his largesse and of his soverayn bounté, therfore is he cleped, *Jhesus Nazarenus rex Judæorum*. Jhesus is for to saye, saveour or salvacioun, of whom men shal hope to have forgevenes of synnes, which that is proprely salvacioun of synnes. And therfore seyde the aungel to Joesph, thow shalt clepe his name Jhesus, that shal save his poeple of there synnes. And herof saith seint Petir, ther is noon other name

under heven, that is given to any man, by which a man may be sayvd, but oonly Jhesus. Nazarenus is as moche to saye as florishing, in which a man shal hope, that he that geveth him remissioun of synnes, shal give him grace wel to doo. For in the flour is hope of fruyt in tyme comynge, and in forgivenes hope of grace wel to do. I was at the dore of thin herte, saith Jhesus, and cleped for to entre; he that openith to me, shal have forgevenes of synne; I wol entre into him by my grace, and soupe with him by the goode workes that he shal doon, whiche werkes be the foode of God, and he shal soupe with me by the grete joye that I schal give him. Thus shal man hope, that for his werkis of penaunce God shal give him his kingdom, as he promiseth him in the Gospel.

Now shal man understonde, in what maner shal be his contricioun. I say, it shal be universal and total, this is to say, a man shal be verray repentaunt for alle his synnes, that he hath doon in delyt of his thought, for delit is ful perilous. For ther ben tuo maners of consentyng, that one of hem is cleped consentynge of affeccioun, whan a man is moved to synne, and delitith him longe for to thinke on that synne, and his resoun parceyveth wel that it is synne agayns the lawe of God, and yit his resoun refreyneth not his foule delit or talent, though he seeth wel apertly, that it is ayenst the reverence of God; although his resoun consente not to do the synne in dede, yit say some doctours, delyt that duellith longe it is ful perilous, al be it never so little. And also a man shulde sorwe, namely for al that he hath desired agayn the lawe of God, with parfyt consentynge of his hert and of his resoun, for therof is no doute, that it is dedly synne in the consentynge, for certis ther is no dedly synne, but that it was not first in mannes thought, and after that in his delit, and so forth into consentyng, and into dede. Wherfore say I, that many men repente them never of suche thoughtes and delites, nor never shrive hem of it, but oonly of the dede of grete synnes outward. Wherfore I say, that suche wickid delitis and wickid thoughtes be subtile bigilours of them that shuln be damned. Moreover man oughte to sorwe for his wicked wordes, as wel as his wikked dedes; for certis the repentaunce of a singuler synne, and nought to repente of alle his other synnes, or elles repente him of alle his othere sinnes, and not of a singulere sinne, may nought availe. For certis God Almighty is al good, and therfore he

forgeveth al, or elles right nought. And hereof saith seint Augustin, I wot certeynly, that God is enemy to every synnere; and how thanne he that observith oon synne, shal he have remissioun of the remenant of his other synnes? Nay. And fortherover, contricioun shulde be wondrous sorwful and anguisshous, and therfore givith him God pleinly his mercy. And therfore whan my soule was anguisshous withinne me, I hadde remembraunce of God, that my prayer mighte come to him. And fortherover, contricioun moste be continuelly, and that a man have stedefast purpos to shryve him, and for to amende him of his lyf. For sothly, whil contricioun lastith, man may ever hope of forgevenes. And of this cometh hate of synne, that destroyeth synne bothe in himself, and eek in other folk at his power. And therfore saith David, ye that loven God, hatith wikkidnesse; for trust wel for to love God, is for to love that he loveth, and hate that he hateth.

The laste thing that a man shuld understonde in contricioun is this, wherof availith contricioun? I say, that som tyme contricioun delivereth man fro synne; of which that David saith, I say, quoth David, that is to saye I purposid fermely to shryve me, and thou, Lord, relesedist my synne. And right so as contricioun availith nat withoute firm purpos of shrift if man have oportunité, right so litil worth is shrifte or satisfaccioun withoute contricioun. And, moreover, contricioun destruyeth the prisoun of helle, and makith wayk and feble the strengthes of the develes, and restorith the gift of the holy gost, and of alle vertues, and it clensith the soule of synnes, and delivereth the soule fro the peynes of helle, and fro the companye of the devel, and fro the servage of synne, and restorith it to alle goodes spiritueles, into the companye and communioun of holy chirche. And fortherover, it makith him that somtyme was sone of ire, to be the sone of grace; and alle these thinges he provith by holy writte. And therfore he that wil sette his herte to these thinges, he were ful wys. For sothe he sholde not thanne in al his lyf have corrage to synne, but given his body and al his herte to the service of Jhesu Crist, and therof do him homage. For certis oure swete Lord Jhesu Crist hath sparid us so debonairly in oure folyes, that if he ne hadde pité of mannes soule, sory songe mighte we alle synge.

EXPLICIT PRIMA PARS PENITENTIÆ; ET INCIPIT SECUNDA PARS EJUSDEM

The secounde part of penitence is confessioun, that is, signe of contricioun. Now shul ye understonde what is confessioun; and whethir it oughte needes be doon or noon; and whiche thinges ben convenable to verray confessioun. First shalt thou understonde, that confessioun is verrey shewyng of synnes to the prest; this is to sayn verray, for he must shewe him of alle the condiciouns that ben longynge to his synne, as ferforth as he can; al must be sayd, and nought excused, nor hyd, nor forwrappid; and nought avaunte him of his goode werkis. And forthermore it is necessary to understonde whens that synnes springe, and how thay encresen, and whiche thay be.

Of the springing of synnes as seint Poul saith, in this wise; that right as by a man synne entrede first into this world, and thrugh that synne deth, right so thilke deth entred into alle men shat synneden; and this man was Adam, by whom that synne entred into this world, whan he brak the comaundement of God. And therfore he that first was so mighty, that he shulde not have deyed, bicam since such an one that he moste needis deye, whethir he wolde or noon, and al his progenie that is in this world, that in thilke manner synneden. Loke that in the estate of innocence, whan Adam and Eve nakid were in Paradys, and no thing shame hadden of their nakidnesse, how that the serpent, that was most wily of alle other bestis that god hadde makid, sayde to the womman, why comaundid God to yow ye shulde nought ete of every tree in Paradys? The womman answerde, of the fruyt, quoth she, of the trees in Paradys we feede us, but sothly of the fruyt of the tre that is in the myddil of Paradis God forbad us for to eten, nor not touche it, lest peraventure we shulde deye. The serpent syde to the womman, nay, nay, ye shal not deye of deth, for sothe God wot, that what day ye ete therof youre eyen shal open and ye shul ben as goddis, knowing good and harm. The womman saw the tree was good to feedyng, and fair to the eyen, and delitable to sight; she tok of the fruyt of the tree and eet it, and gaf to hir housbond, and he eet it; and anoon the eyen of them bothe openeden; and whan that thay knewe that thay were naked, thay sowed of fige leves in maner of breches, to hiden

their membris. Here may ye see, that dedly synne hath first suggestioun of the feend, as sheweth here by the Adder (serpent); and aftirward the delit of the fleish, as sheweth here by Eve; and after that the consentyng of resoun, as shewith by Adam. For trust wel, though so were that the feend temptid oon, Eve, that is to sayn the fleissh, and the flesshe hadde delit in the beauté of the fruyt detendid, yit certes til that resoun, that is to say, Adam, consentide to the etyng of the fruyt, yit stood he in thastaat of innocence. Of thilk Adam took we thilke synne original; for of him flesshly descendit be we alle and engendrit of vile and corrupt matiere; and whan the soule is put in oure body, right anoon is contracted original synne; and that, that was erst but onely peyne of concupiscence, is afterwarde bothe peyne and sinne; and therfore be we alle i-born sones of wraththe, and of damnacioun durable, if it were not for baptisme that we resceyven, which taketh from us the culpe. But forsothe the peyne duellith with us as to temptacioun, which peyne highte concupiscence. And this concupiscence, whan it is wrongfully disposed or ordeyned in man, it makith him to coveyte, the covetise of fleisshly synne, by sight of his eyen, as to erthely thinges, and eek coveityse of highnesse, as by pride of herte.

Now as to speke of the firste coveitise, that is concupiscence after the lawe of oure membris, that weren lawfulli maked, and be rihtful judgement of God, I saie, for as moche that a man is nought also obeissant to God, that is his Lord, therfore is fleissh to him disobeisant thurgh concupiscence, which that yit is cleped norisshing of synne, and occasion of synne. Therfore, al the while that a man hath in him the peyne of concupiscence, it is impossible but he be tempted somtyme and moved in his fleish to synne. And this may not faile, as longe as he liveth. Hit may wel wexe feeble and faille by vertu of baptisme, and by the grace of God thorugh penitence; but fully shal it never quenche, that he shal somtyme be moved in himself, but if he were al refreynit by siknes, or by malefice of sorcerye, or colde drinkes. For what saith seint Poul? the fleissh coveitith agayn the spirit, and the spirit agayn the fleisch; thay ben so contrarie and so stryven, that a man may nought alway do as he wolde. The same seint Poul, after his penaunce, in watir and in lond; in watir by night and by day, in gret peril, and in gret peyne; in lond and in famyne and in thurst, and colde and clothless;

oones almost stoned al to the deth; yit saide he, allas! I caytif man, who shal delyvere me fro the prisoun of my caytif body? And seint Jerom, whan he long tyme hadde lived in desert, here wher as he hadde no compainye but of wilde bestes; wher he hadde no mete but herbes, and water to his drinke, nor no bed but the nakid erthel for which his fleish was as blak as an Ethiopen, for hete, and neight destroyed for cold; yit sayde he, that the brennyng of lecchery boylid in al his body. Wherfore I wot wel surely that thay be desceyved that say, thay ben not temptid in their body. Witnesse on seint Jame thapostil, that saith, that every wight is tempted in his oune concupiscence; that is to sayn, that everych of us hath matere and occasioun to be tempted of the norishyng of synne that is in his body. And therfore seint Johan the Evaungelist saith, if that we sayn we be withoute synne, we deceyve ouresilf, and trouthe is nought in us.

Now shal ye understonde in what maner that synne waxith and encreseth in a man. The firste thing is thilke norishing of synne, of which I spak biforn, thilke concupiscence; and after that cometh the suggestione of the devel, this is to sayn, the develes bely, with which he bloweth in man the fyr of fleisshly concupiscence; and after that a man by thinketh him whether he wol don it or non, thilke thing to which he is tempted. And thanne if that a man withstonde and wayve the firste entisynges of his fleisshe, and of the feend, it is no synne; and if so be he do not so, thanne feleth he anoon a flame of delit, and thanne it is good to be war and kepe him wel, or ellis he wil falle anoon into consentyng of synne, and thanne wol he do it, if he may have tyme, and space, and place. And of this matere saith Moyses about the devel, in this maner; the feend saith, I wol chace and pursewe the man by wickid suggestiouns, and I wil catch him by movyng or steryng of synne, and I wil parte my prise, or my pray, by deliberacioun, and my lust shal be accomplisit in delit; I wil drawe my sword in consentynge; (for certes, right as a swerd departith a thing in tuo parties, right so consentynge departeth God fro man;) and thanne wol I sle him with my hond in dede of synne. Thus saith the feend; for certis, thanne is a man al deed in soule; and thus is synne accomplisid, by temptacioun, by delit, and by consentyng; and thanne is the synne cleped actuel.

For sothe synne is in two maneres, either it is venial, or

dedly synne. Sothly, whan man lovith any creature more than Jhesu Crist oure creatour, thanne it is dedly synne; and venial synne is, if a man love Jhesu Crist lesse than him oughte. For sothe the dede of this venial synne is ful perilous, for it lesseneth the love that men shulde have to God, more and more. And therfore if a man charge more himself with many suche venial synnes, certes, but if so be that he som tyme discharge him of hem by shrifte, thay maye ful lightly lessen in him al the love that he hath to Jhesu Crist; and in this wise skippith venial into dedly synne. For certes, the more that a man chargith his soule with venial synnes, the more is he enclyned to falle in deedly synne. And therfore let us nought be negligent to descharge us of venial synnes. For the proverbe saith, that many smale makith a gret. And herken this ensample; a greet wawe of the see cometh som tyme with so gret a violence, that it sinketh the schip; and the same harm do som tyme smale droppis of watir, that entrith thurgh a litil crevice into the hold, and into the bothum of a schip, if men be so negligent, that thay descharge it nought by tyme. And therfore, although ther be difference betueene these tuo causes of sinking, algates the ship is sunk. Right so farith it som tyme of deedly synne, and of hurtful venial synnes, whan thay multiplien in a man so gretly, that thilke wordly thynges that he loveth, thurgh which he sinneth venially, are as gret in his herte as the love of God, or more. And therfore the love of every thing that is not set in God, nor doon principally for Goddes sake, although a man love it lesse than God, yit is it venial synne; and deedly synne, whan the love of eny thing weyeth in the hert of a man, as moche as the love of God, or more. Dedly synne, is, as saith seint Austyn, whan man torneth his hert from God, which that is verray soverayn bounté, that may not chaunge and flitte, and give his herte to a thing that may chaunge and flitte; and certes, that is every thing save onely God of heven. For sothe, if that a man give his love, the which that he owith to God with al his herte, unto a creature, certes, as moche of love as he giveth to thilke creature, so moche he reveth fro God, and therfore doth he synne, for he that is dettour to God, nor yeldeth not to God al his dette, that is to sayn, al the love of his hert.

Now since man understondith generally which is venial synne, thanne is it covenable to telle specially of synnes,

whiche that many a man peraventure demith them no synnes, and shryveth him not of the same thinges, and yit natheles thay ben synnes; and, sothly, as clerkes writen; this is to say, at every tyme that man etith or drinkith more than suffiseth to the sustenaunce of his body, in certeyn he doth synne; and eek whan he spekith more than it needith, he doth synne; and eek whan he herkeneth nought benignely the pleynt of the pore; eek whan he is in health of body, and wil not faste whan other folk fasten, withouten cause resonable; eek whan he slepith more than needith, or whan he cometh by thilk reason too late to holy chirche, or to other werkes of charité; eke whan he useth his wyf withoute soverayn desir of engendrure, to thonour of God, and for thentent to yelde his wyf the dette of his body; eek whan he wil not visite the sike, and the prisoner, if he may; eek if he love wyf, or child, or other worldly thing, more than resoun requireth; eek if he flatere or blaundisshe more than him oughte for eny necessité; ek if a man lessen or withdrawe the almesse of the povere; eek if he apparaylith his mete more deliciously than it nedith, or ete it to hastily by licouresnes; eek if he talke of vanitees at chirche, or at Goddis service, or that he be a talkere of ydile wordes of vanité or of vilonye, for he shal yelde of them acount at the day of doome; eek whan he assureth to do thinges that he may nought performe; eek whan that by lightnes of foly he myssaith or scorneth his neighebor; eek whan he hath eny wicked suspeccioun of thing, that he wot of it no sothfastnesse: these thinges and mo withoute nombre ben synnes, as saith seint Austyn. Now shal men understonde, that al be it so that nonn erthely man may eschewe alle venial synnes, yit may he refreyne them by the brennyng love that he hath to oure Lord Jhesu Crist, and by prayeres, and by confessioun, and other goode werkes, so that it shal but litil greve. For, as saith seint Austyn, yif a man love God in such a maner, that al that ever he doth is in the love of God, or for the love of God verraily, for he brenneth in the love of God, loke how moche that a drope of watir, that fallith in a furneys ful of fyr, annoyeth or greveth the brenninge of the fyre, so moche in like manere annoyeth or greveth a venial synne unto a man that is perfyt in the love of Jhesu Crist. Men may also refreyne venial synne, by the resceyvyng of the precious body of Jhesu Crist; by resceyvyng eek of holy water; by almes dede; by general confessioun of *Confiteor* at masse,

and at pryme, and at complyn; and by blessing of bisshops and of prestes, and by other goode werkis.

Now it behoveth to telle whiche ben dedly synnes, that is to sayn, cheeftaines of synnes; for as moche as alle thay renne in oon way, but in divers maners. Now ben thay cleped cheeftaines, for as moche as thay be chief and springers of alle othere synnes. The roote of these seven synnes thanne is pride, the general synne and roote of alle harmes. For of this roote springen general braunches; as ire, envye, accidie or sleuthe, avarice or coveitise (to commune understondynge), glotonye, and leccherie: and everich of these synnes hath his braunches and his twigges, as shal be declarid in there chapitres folwinge.

De Superbia

And though so be, that no man can telle utterly the nombre of the twigges, and of the harm that cometh of pride, yit wol I shewe a party of them, as ye shul understonde. Ther is inobedience, avauntyng, ypocrisye, despit, arragaunce, impudence, swellyng of hert, insolence, elacioun, inpacience, strif, contumacie, presumpcioun, irreverence, pertinacie, veinglorie, and many another twigge that I can not telle nor declare. Inobedient is he that disobeieth for despyt to the comaundements of God, and to his sovereigns, and to his gostly fader. Avauntour, is he that bosteth of the harm or of the bounté that he hath don. Ypocrisy, is he that hydeth to shewe him such as he is, and sheweth him such as he is not. Despitous, is he that hath desdayn of his neighebour, that is to say, of his evencristen, or hath despit to doon that him oughte to doon. Arragaunt, is he that thinketh that he hath thilke bountees in him, that he hath not, or weneth that he shulde have them by desert, or elles he demeth that he is that he is not. Impudent, is he that for his pride hath no shame of his synne. Swellyng of hert, is whan a man rejoysith him of harm that he hath don. Insolent, is he that dispisith in his judgement alle other folk, as to regard of his valeu, and of his connyng, and of his spekyng, and of his beryng. Elacioun, is whan he may never suffre to have maister ne felawe. Impacient, is he that wil not ben i-taught nor robbed of his vices, and by stryf werreth against trouthe wityngely, and defendeth his folie. Contimax, is he that thrugh his indignacioun is agains everych auctorité or power

of them that been his soverayns. Presumpcioun, is whan a man undertakith and emprisith that him oughte not to do, or elles that he may not doo, and that is cleped surquidrye. Irreverence, is whan men doon not honour ther as they oughte to doon, and wayteth to be reverenced. Pertinacie, is whan man defendith his folye, and trusteth too moche to his owne witte. Vaynglorie, is for to have pomp, and delit in temporal highnes, and glorifie him in worldly estaat. Jangelyng, is whan a man skekith to moche biforn folk, and clappith as a mille, and taketh no keep what he saith.

And yit is ther a privé spice of pride, that wayteth first to be saluted ere he salute, al be he lesse worth than that other is, paradventure; and eek wayteth or desireth to sitte above him, or to go above him in the way, or kisse the pax, or ben encensed, or gon to the offringe biforn his neighebore, and suche semblable thinges, against his duté peraventure, but that he hath his herte and his entente in suche a proud desir to be magnified and honoured before the poeple.

Now be ther tuo maners of pride; that oon is highnes withinne the hert of a man, and that other is withoute. Of which sothly these forsayde thinges, and mo than I have said, aperteynen to pride that is in the hert of a man; and that other species of pride be withoute; but natheles, that oon of thise species of pride is signe of that other, right as the gay arbour at the taverne is signe of wyn that is in the celer. And this is in many thinges; as in speche and contenaunce, and in outrageous array of clothing. For certis, if ther hadde be no synne in clothing, Crist wolde not so soone have notid and spoke of the clothing of thilke riche man in the gospel. And seint Gregorie saith, that precious clothing is culpable for derthe of it, and for his shortnes, and for his straungenes and disguising, and for the superfluité, or for the inordinat skantnes of it; allas! many man may sen as in oure dayes, the synful costly array of clothing, and namely in too moche superfluité, or elles in to disordinat scantnes.

As to the firste synne that is in superfluité of clotheynge, which that makid is so dere, to harm of the poeple, not oonly the cost of embrowdyng, the deguyse, endentyng or barryng, waving, palyng or bendyng, and semblable wast of cloth in vanité; but ther is also costly furring in there gownes, so moch punching of chiseles to make holes, so moche daggyng of sheris, for with the superfluité in lengthe of the forsaide gownes, traylinge in the donge and in the myre, on hors and

eek on foote, as wel of man as of womman, that al thilke traylyng is verraily (as in effect) wasted, consumed, thredbare, and rotyn with donge, rather than it is geven to the pore, to gret damage of the forsaide pore folke, and that in sondry wise; this is to sain, the more that cloth is wastid, the more most it coste to the poeple for the scarsenes; and forthermore, if it so be that thay wolde give suche punched and daggid clothing to the pore folk, it is not convenient to were to the pore folk, nor suffisaunt to serve their necessité, to kepe them fro the desperaunce of the colde firmament. Upon that other syde, to speke of the horrible disordinat scantnes of clothing, as be these cuttid sloppis or smocks, that thurgh their shortnes cover not the shamful membres of man, to wickid entent; allas! som men of them shewen the shap and the boce of the horrible swollen membres, that semeth like to the maledies of hirnia, in the wrapping of there hose, and eek the buttokes of them, that faren as it were the hinder part of the she ape in the fulle of the moone. And moreover the wrecchid swollen membres that thay shewe thurgh desgysyng, in departyng of there hoses in whyt and reed, seemith that half the shameful privé membres were flayn. And if it so be that thay departe there hosen in other colours, as is whit and blew, or whit and blak, or blak and reed, and so forth; thanne semith it, as by variaunce of colour, that half the party of his privy membris ben corrupt by the fyr of seint Antony, or by cancre, or by other such meschaunce. And yit of the hynder partye of there buttokes it is ful horrible for to see, for certis in that partie of there body ther as thay purgen her stynkyng ordure, that foule party shewe thay to the poeple proudly in despyt of honesté, which honesté that Jhesu Crist and his frendes observeden to shewen in their lif. Now as of the outrageous array of wommen, God wot, that though the visage of some of them seme ful chaste and debonaire, yit notifye thay, in there array of attyre, licorousnesse and pride. I say not that honesté in clothing of man or womman is uncovenable, but certis the superfluité or disordinat skantnes of clothing is reprevable. Also the synne of there ornament, or of apparaile, as in thinges that aperteynen to rydyng, as in to many delicat horses, that ben holden for delyt, that thay ben so faire, fat, and costly; and also in many a vicious knave, mayntened bycause of them; and in to curious harnoys, as in sadelis, and bridlis, croupours, and breastplates, covered with pre-

cious clothing, and riche barres and plates of gold and of silver. For whiche God saith by Zacharie the prophete, I wol confounde the ryders of such horsis. These folk take litil reward of the ryding of Goddes sone of heven, and of his harneys, whan he rode upon an asse, and hadde noon other harneys but the clothing of his povere disciples. We rede not that ever he rode on other beest. I speke this for the synne of superfluité, and nought for resonable honesté, whan resoun it requirith. And fortherover, certes pride is gretly notified in holdyng of gret retinue, whan thay ben of litil profyt or of right no profyt, and namely whan that retinue is felenous and daungerous to the poeple by hardynesse of lordshipe, or by way of offices; for certes, suche lordes selle thanne there lordschipe to the devel of helle, whan thay susteyne the wickidnes of there retinue. Or elles, whan these folk of low degré, as is thilke that holden hostilries, and susteyne the theftes of their hostilers, and that is in many maneres of disceytes; thilke maner of folk be the flyes that folwen the hony, or elles the houndes that folwen the carrion. Suche forsayde folk strangelen spirituelly there lordshipes; for whiche thus saith David the prophete, wikked deth shal come upon such lordshipes, and God geve that thay descende into helle adoun; for in there houses ben iniquities and shrewednesses, and not God of heven. And certes, save thay do amendement, right so as Jacob gaf his benisoun to Laban by the service of God, and to Pharao by the service of Joseph, right so God wil geve his malisoun to such lordshipes as susteynen the wikkednes of their servauntes, unless thay come to amendement.

Pride of the table apperith ful ofte; for certes riche men ben cleped to festes, and pore folk ben put away and rebuked; also in excesse of divers metis and drinkis, and namely of suche maner of bake metis and dishe metes brennyng in wilde fuyr, and peynted and castelid with papire, and semblable waste, so that it is abusioun for to thinke. And eek in greet preciousnes of vessel, and in curiousnesse of vessel, and of mynstralcye, by the whiche a man is stired the more to delitis of luxurie; if so be that thay sette their herte the lasse upon oure Lord Jhesu Crist, certeyn it is a synne; and certeinly the delites mighte be so grete in this caas, that men mighte lightly falle by them into dedly synne. The species that spring from pride, sothely whan thay spring from malice y-magined and avised, aforn cast, or elles of usage,

ben dedly synnes, it is no doute. And whan thay spring by frelté unavysed sodeinly, and sodeinly withdrawe agayn, al be thay grevous synnes, I gesse thay ben not dedly. Now mighte men axe, whereof pride cometh and springeth. I say som tyme it springith of the goodes of nature, and som tyme of the goodes of fortune, and som tyme of the goodes of grace. Certes the goodes of nature stonden either in goodes of body, or goodes of soule. Certis, the goodes of the body ben helth of body, strengthe, delivernesse, beauté, gentrie, fraunchise; the goodes of nature of the soule ben goode wit, sharp understondyng, subtil engyn, vertu naturel, good memorie; goodes of fortune been richesses, highe degrees of lordshipes, and preisyng of the poeple; goodes of grace been science, power to suffre spirituel travaile, benignité vertuous contemplacioun, withstondyng of temptacioun, and semblable thinges; of whiche forsayde goodes, certes it is a ful gret foly, a man to pryden him in any of them alle. Now as for to speke of goodes of nature, God wot that som tyme we have them in nature as moche as to oure damage as to oure profit. As for to speke of helth of body, certes it passith ful lightly, and eek it is ful ofte reason of the siknesse of the soule. For God wot, the flesshe is a ful grete enmy to the soule; and therfore the more that oure body is hool, the more be we in peril to falle. Eke for to pride him in his strengthe of body, it is a foly; for certes the fleish coveytith against the spirit; and ay the more strong that the fleish is, the sorier may the soule be; and overal, this strengthe of body and worldly hardynes causeth ful ofte many man peril and meschaunce. Eek for to pride him of his gentrie is ful gret folye; for othen tyme the gentrie of the body taketh away the gentery of the soule; and we ben alle of oon fader and of oon moder; and alle we ben of oon nature roten and corrupt, bothe riche and pore. For sothe oon maner gentry is for to prayse, that apparailleth mannes corrage with vertues and moralitees, and makith him Cristes child; for trust wel, over what man that synne hath maistry, he is a verray serf to synne.

Now ben ther general signes of gentilessce; as shewyng of vice and rybaudrie, and servage of synne, in word, in werk and contenaunce, and usinge vertu, curtesie, and clennes, and to be liberal, that is to sayn, large by mesure; for thilke that passith mesure is foly and synne. And another is to remembre him of bounté that he of other folk hath receyved.

Another is to be benigne to his goode subjectis; wherfore, as saith Senek, ther is nothing more covenable to a man of high estate, then debonairté and pité; and therfore thise flies than men clepen bees, whan thay make there king, thay choosen oon that hath no pricke wherwith he may stynge. Another is, a man to have a noble herte and a diligent, to atteine to hihe vertuous thinges. Certis, also who that prideth him in the goodes of grace, is eek an outrageous fool; for thilke giftes of grace that shulde have i-torned him to goodnes and medicyne, torneth him to venym and to confusioun, as saith seint Gregory. Certis also, who-so pridith him in the goodes of fortune, he is a ful gret fool; for som tyme is a man a gret lord by the morwe, that is a caytif and a wrecche er it be night; and some tyme the riches of a man is cause of his deth: and som tyme the delice of a man is cause of his grevous maledye, thurgh which he deieth. Certis, the commendacioun of the poeple is som tyme ful fals and ful brutil for to truste; this day thay prayse, to morwe thay blame. God wot, desir to have commendacioun of the poeple hath causid deth of many a busy man.

Remedium Contra Superbiam

Now since so is, that ye have herd and understonde what is pride, and whiche ben the species of it, and whens pride cometh and springeth; now shul ye understonde which is the remedy agayns pride; and that is humilité or meekenes, that is a vertu thurgh which a man hath verray knowleche of himself, and holdith of himself no pride, nor pris, nor deynté, as in regard of his desertes, considering evermore his frelté. Now ben ther thre maners of humilité; as humilité in hert, another is humilité in his mouth, the thridde in his workes. The humilité in his herte is in foure maners; that oon is, whan a man holdith himself not worth biforn God of heven; another is, whan he despiseth no man; the thrid is, whan he ne rekkith nought though a man holde him nought worth; the ferthe is, whan he holdeth him nought sory of his humiliacioun. Also the humilité of mouth is in foure thinges; in attempre speche; in humbles of speche; and whan he byknowith with his owne mouth, that he is such as him thenkith that he is in herte; another is, whan he praisith the bounté of another man and nothing thereof lesseneth. Humilité eek in werk is in foure maneres. The first is, whan

he puttith other men tofore him; the secounde is, to chese the lowest place over al; the thrid is, gladly to assente to good counseil; the ferthe is, gladly to stonde to thaward of his sovereyns, or of him that is in higher degré; certeyn this is a gret werk of humilité.

De Invidia

After pride now wol I speke of the foule synne of envye, which that is, as by the word of the philosophre, sorwe of other mennes prosperité; and after the word of seint Austyn, is it sorwe of other mennes wele, and joye of other mennes harm. This foule synne is platly agayns the Holy Gost. Al be it so, that every synne is agayn the Holy Gost, yit natheles, for as moche as bounté aperteyneth proprely to the Holy Gost, and envye cometh proprely of malice, therfore is it proprely agayns the bounté of the Holy Gost. Now hath malice tuo species, that is to sayn, hardnes of hert in wickednes, or ellis the fleish of man is so blynd, that he considereth not that he is in synne, or rekketh not that he is in synne; which is the hardnes of the devyl. That other species of envye is, whan a man abuseth trouthe, and wot that it is trouthe, and eek wan he abuseth the grace that God hath geve to his neighebor, and al this is by envye. Certes than is envye the worste synne that is; for sothely alle other synnes ben somtyme oonly agains oon special vertu; but certes envye is agayns alle vertues and agayns al goodnes; for it is sory of alle the bountees of his neighbor; and in this maner it is divers from all the synnes; for wel scarce is ther any synne that it hath not som delit in hitself, sauf oonly envye, that ever hath in itself anguish and sorwe. The species of envye ben these. Ther is first sorwe of other mennes goodnes and of their prosperité; and prosperité is kyndely matier of joye; thanne is envye a synne agayns kynde. The secounde spice of envye is joye of other mennes harm; and that is proprely lik to the devyl, that ever joyeth him of mennes harm. Of these tuo species cometh bakbityng; and this synne of bakbytyng or detraccioun hath certein species, as thus: som man praisith his neighebor by a wickid entent, for he makith alway a wickid knotte atte last ende; alway he makith a but at the last ende, that is thing of more blame, than worth is al the praysing. The secounde species is, that if a man be good, and doth or saith

a thing to good entent, the bakbiter wol torne al thilke goodnes up-so-doun to his shrewed entent. The thridde is to lessen the bounté of his neighebor. The ferthe species of bakbytyng is this, that if men speke goodnes of a man, than wil the bakbiter seyn, "Parfay, yit such a man is bet than he;" in dispraysynge of him that men praise. The fifte species is this, for to consente gladly and herken gladly to the harm that men speke of other folk. This synne is ful gret, and ay encresith after thentent of the bakbiter. After bakbytyng cometh grucching or murmuracioun, and som tyme it springith of inpacience agayns God, and somtyme agains man. Agayns God is it whan a man grucchith agayn the pyne of helle, or agayns poverté, or of losse of catel, or agayns reyn or tempest, or elles grucchith that shrewes have prosperité, or ellis that goode men have adversité; and alle these thinges shulde men suffre paciently, for thay come by rightful judgement and ordinaunce of God. Som tyme cometh grucching of avarice, as Judas grucched ayens the Maudeleyn, whan she anoyntede the hed of oure Lord Jhesu Crist with hir precious oynement. This maner murmur is swich as whan man grucchith of goodnes that himself doth, or that other folk doon of there owne catel. Som tyme cometh murmur of pride, as whan Symon the Pharise grucchid agayn the Maudeleyn, whan she approchide to Jhesu Crist and wepte at his feet for hir synnes; and somtyme it cometh of envye, whan men discoveren a mannes harm that was privé, or bereth him on hond thing that is fals. Murmuryng eek is ofte among servaunts, that grucchen whan there soverayns bidden them to doon lawful thinges; and for as moche as thay dare nought openly withstonde the comaundements of there soverayns, yit wol thay sayn harm and grucche and murmure prively for verray despit; whiche wordes men clepe the develes Pater noster, though so be that the devel hadde never Pater noster, but that lewed men calle it so. Som tyme it cometh of ire of privé hate, that norisheth rancour in herte, as afterward I shal declare. Thanne cometh eek bitternes of herte, thorugh which bitternesse every good deede of his neighebore semeth to him bitter and unsavery. But thanne cometh discord that unbyndeth alle maner of frendshipe. Thanne cometh scornynge of his neighebor, al do he never so wel. Thanne cometh accusyng, as whan man seketh occasioun to annoyen his neighebore, which that is lik the craft of the devel, that waytith bothe night and day

to accuse us alle. Thanne cometh malignité, thurgh which a man annoyeth his neighebor prively if he may, and if he may not, algate his wikkid wille shal nought wante, as for to brenne his hous prively, or empoysone him, or sleen his bestis prively, and semblable thinges.

Remedium Contra Invidiam

Now wol I speke of the remedies agayns thise foule things and this foule synne of envye. First is the love of God principal, and lovynge of his neighebor as himself; sothely that oon may nought ben withoute that other. And truste wel, that in the name of thy neighebour thou shalt understonde the name of thy brother; for certes alle we have oon fader fleisshly, and oon mooder, that is to sain, Adam and Eva; and eek oon fader spirituel, and that is God of heven. Thy neighebor art thou holden for to love, and wilne him al godenesse, and therfore seith God, Love thine neyghebour as thiself; that is to sayn, bothe to salvacioun of lif and of soule. And moreover thou shalt love him in word, and in benigne admonishing and chastising, and conforte him in his annoyes, and praye for him with al thin herte. And in dede thou shalt love him in such wise that thou shalt do to him in charité, as thou woldist it were doon to thin oune persone; and therefore thou shalt doon him noon harme in wikked word, ne damage him in his body, nor in his catel, nor in his soule, by wicked entising of ensample. Thou shalt nought desiren his wif, nor noone of his thinges. Understonde eek that in the name of thy neighebor is comprehendid his enemy; certes man shal love his enemy by the comaundement of God, and sothly thy frend shalt thou love in God. I sayde thin enemy shalt thou love for Goddes sake, by his comaundement; for if it were resoun that man shulde hate his enemy, forsothe God wolde nought receyve us to his love that be his enemyes. Agains thre maner of wronges that his enemy doth to him, he shal do thre thinges, as thus: agayns hate and rancour of herte, he shal love him in herte; agayns chydyng and wicked wordes, he shal praye for his enemye; agains wikked dede of his enemy, he shal doon him bounté. For Crist saith, love youre enemyes, and pray for them that speke yowe harme, and eke for them that yow chacen and pursewen; and do bounté to them that yow haten. Lo, thus comandeth us oure Lord Jhesu Crist to do to oure

enemyes; for sothely nature driveth us to love oure frendes; and parfay oure enemyes have more neede to love than oure frendes. For sothely to them that more neede have, certis to them shul men do goodnes. And certis in thilke dede have we the remembraunce of the love of Jhesu Crist that dyede for his enemys. And in as moche as thilke love is more grevous to parforme, so moche is the more gret remedye and meryt, and therfore the lovyng of oure enemy hath confoundid the venym of the devel; for right as the devel is confoundid by humilité, right so is he woundid to the deth by love of oure enemy. Certes thanne is love the medicine that castith out the venym of envye fro mannes hert. The species of this part shuln be more largely declared in chapitres folwynge.

De Ira

After envye wol I descryben the synne of ire; for sothely who so hath envye upon his neighbor, anoon he wol comunly fynde him a matere of wrath in word or in dede agayns him to whom he hath envie. And as wel cometh ire of pride as of envye, for sothly he that is proud or envyous is lightly wroth. This synne of ire, after the descrybyng of seint Austeyn, is wikked wille to be avengid by word or by dede. Ire, after the philosofer, is the fervent blood of man i-quiked in his hert, thurgh which he wolde harm to him that him hatith; for certes the hert of man by heting and movyng of his blood waxith so trouble, that he is out of alle judgements of resoun. But ye shal understonde that ire is in tuo maneres, that oon of hem in good, that other is wikked. The good ire is by jalousy of goodnesse, thurgh which a man is wroth with wikkidnes and ayeines wykkednesse. And therefore saith a wise man, that ire is bet than play. This ire is with debonaireté, and it is wroth without bitternes; not wroth with the man, but wroth with the mysdedes of the man; as saith the prophet David, *Irascimini, et nolite peccare*, etc. Now understonde that wikked ire is in tuo maners, that is to sayn, sodeyn ire or hasty ire withoute avysement and consenting of resoun; the menynge and sentence of this is, that the resoun of a man consentith not to this sodein ire, and thanne is it venial. Another ire is ful wicked, that cometh of felony of herte, avysed and cast biforn, with wicked wille to do vengeaunce, and therto his resoun consentith; and sothely this

is deedly synne. This ire is so displesaunt to God, that it troublith his hous, and chaceth the holy Gost out of mannes soule, and wastith and destroyeth the liknes of God, that is to saye, the vertu that is in mannes soule, and put in him the likenes of the devel, and taketh the man fro God that is his rightful lord. This ire is a ful greet plesaunce to the devel, for it is the develes furnace that is warmed with the fyr of helle. For certes right so as fyr is more mighty to destroye erthely thinges, than eny other element, right so ire is mighty to destroye alle spirituel thinges. Loke how that fyr of smale sparks, that ben almost dede under asshen, wolden quiken agayn whan thay be touched with brimstoon, right so ire wille evermore qwyken ayeine whan it is touched by pride that is covered in mannes herte. For certes fyr may nought come out of no thing, but-if it were first in the same thinge naturelly; as fyr is drawe out of flintes with steel. Right so as pride is often tyme mater of ire, right so is rancour norice and keper of ire. Ther is a maner tree, as saith seint Isydre, that whan men maken fyr of thilke tree, and cover the colis with asshen, sothly the fyr of it wol lasten al a yer or more; and right so fareth it of rancour, whan it oones is conceyved in the hertis of som men, certein it wol lasten from oon Estren day until another Ester day, and more. But certis thilke man is ful fer fro the mercy of God al that while.

In this forsaide develes furnace ther forgen thre shrewes; pride, that ay blowith and encresith the fuyr by chidyng and wickid wordis; thanne standeth envye, and holdeth the hoote iren upon the hert of man, with a paire of longe tonges of rancour; and thanne standeth the sinne of contumelie or strif and quarrel, and baterith and forgeth by wikked slander. Certes this cursed synne annoyeth bothe to the man himsilf, and eek to his neighbor. For sothely almost al the harm that eny man doth to his neighbour cometh thurgh wrath. For certes, outrageous wrath doth al that ever the devyl him comaundeth; for he ne spareth neyther for our Lord Jhesu Crist, nor his swete moder; and in his outrageous anger and ire, allas! ful many oon at that tyme felith in his herte ful wikkedly, bothe of Crist, and eek of alle his saints. Is nat this a cursed vice? Yis, certis. It taketh fro man his witte and his resoun, and al his deboneire lyf spirituel, that sholde kepen his soule. Certes it taketh eek Goddis dewe lordshipe (and that is mannes soule) and the love of his neighbor; hit

stryveth eek alday agayns trouthe; it robbeth him eek the quiete of his hert, and subvertith his herte and his soule.

Of ire cometh these stynkynge engendrures; first, hate, that is old wrath; discord, thurgh which a man forsakith his olde frend that he hath loved ful longe; and thanne cometh werre, and every maner of wronge that man doth to his neighebor in body or in catel. Of this cursed synne of ire cometh eek manslaughter. And understonde wel that homicide (that is, manslaughter) is in divers wise. Som maner of homicide is spirituel, and som is bodily. Spirituel manslaughter is in sixe thinges. First, by hate, as saith seint Johan, he that hateth his brother is an homicide. Homicide is eek by bakbytyng, of whiche bakbiters saith Salamon, that thay have twaye swerdes with whiche thay slen there neighbors; for sothely it is as wikked to take his good name as his lif. Homicidy is eek in gevyng of wikkid counseil by fraude, as for to geve counseil to rouse wicked and wrongful custumes and taliages; of whiche saith Salomon, a leoun roryng and bere hungry be like to the cruel lordshipes, in withholdyng or abrigging of the hyre or the wages of servauntes, or ellis in usure, or in withdrawyng of almes of pore folk. For whiche the wise man saith, feed him that almost dyeth for hunger, for sothely unless thou feede him thou slest him. And eek these be dedly synnes. Bodily manslaughter is, whan thou sleest him with thy tonge in other manere, as whan thou comaundist to slen a man, or elles givest counseil to slee a man. Manslaughter in dede is in foure maneres. That oon is by lawe, right as a justice damnith him that is coupable to the deth; but let the justice be war that he do it rightfully, and that he do it nought for delit to spille blood, but for keping of rightwisnes. Another homicidy is doon for necessité, as whan a man sleth another defending himself, and that he ne may noon other wise escape fro his owen deth; but certeynly, if he may escape withoute slaughter of his adversarie, and sleth him, he doth synne, and he shal bere penaunce as for dedly synne. Eek if a man by caas or adventure shoot an arwe or cast a stoon with which he sleth a man, he is an homicide. Eke if a womman by negligence overlye hir child in hir sleping, it is homicide and deedly synne. Eke whan man distourbith concepcioun of a child, and makith a womman either bareyn by drinke of venemous herbis, thurgh whiche she may nought conceyve, or sleth hir child by drynkes, or elles putteth certeyn material

thinges in hir secre place to slee the child, or elles doth unkyndely synne, by which man, or womman, schedith there nature in manere or in place ther as the child may nought be conceyved; or ellis if a womman have conceyved, and hurt hirself, and sleth the child, yit is it homycide. What say we eek of wommen that mordren here children for drede of worldly schame? Certes, it is an horrible homicidy. Eek if a man approche to a womman by desir of lecchery, thurgh the which the child is perischt; or elles smitith a womman wytyngly, thurgh which she sleeth hir child; alle these be homicides, and dedly orrible synnes. Yit cometh ther of ire many mo synnes, as wel in word, as in werk and thought; as he that accuseth God, and blamith God of thing of which he is himself gulty, or despisith God and alle his saints, as doon these cursed gamblers in diveris cuntrees. This cursed synne don thay, whan thay felen in there herte ful wickidly of God and his saints. Also whan thay treten unreverently the sacrament of the auter; thilke synne is so gret, that scarce may it be relessed, but that the mercy of God passith alle his werkes, and is so gret and so benigne.

Thanne cometh of ire poisonous anger, whan a man is sharply admonished in his shrifte to forlete synne, thanne wol he be angry, and answere mockingly and angrily, to defenden or excusen his synne by unstedefastnesse of his fleish; or elles he dide it to holde companye with his felawes; or ellis he saith the fend entised him; or elles he dide it for his youthe; or ellis his complexioun is so corrageous that he may not forbere; or ellis it is desteny, as he seith, unto a certeine age; or elles he seith it cometh him of gentilesce of his auncestrie, and semblable thinges. Alle these maner of folk so wrappen them in there synnes, that thay wol nought deliver themself. For sothely, no wight that excuseth him wilfully of his synne, may nought be delivered of his synne, til that he mekely acknowledgeth his synne. After this thanne commeth swereinge, that is expres agayns the comaundements of God; and this bifallith often of angir and of ire. God saith, thou shalt not take the name of thy Lord God in vayn or idly. Also, oure Lord Jhesu Crist saith by the word of seint Mathew, ye shal not swere in alle manere, neither by heven, for it is Goddes trone, nor by the eorthe, for it is the benche of his feet, nor by Jerusalem, for it is the cité of a gret king, nor by thin heed, for thou may nought make an hair whit nor blak; but say,

by youre word, yea, yea, and nay, nay; and what it is more, it is of evel. Thus saith Jhesu Crist. For Cristes sake, swere not so synfully, in dismembring of Crist, by soule, herte, bones, and body; for certes it semeth, that ye thenke that cursed Jewes dismembrit nought ynough the precious persone of Crist, but ye dismembre him more. And if so be that the lawe compelle yow to swere, thanne reule yow after the lawe of God in youre swering, as saiith Jeremie, c°. iiij^to. Thou shalt kepe thre condiciouns, thou shalt swere in trouthe, in doom, and in rightwisnes. This is to sayn, thou shalt swere soth; for every lesyng is agayns Crist; for Crist is verray trouthe. And think wel this, that every gret swerer, not compellid lawfully to swere, the wounde shal not depart fro his hous, whil he useth such unleful sweringe. Thou shalt eek swere in doom, whan thou art constreined by thy domesman to witnesse the trouthe. Eek thou shalt not swere for envye, nor for favour, nor for meede, but onely for rightwisnesse, and for declaring of it to the worship of God, and helping of thin evencristen. And therfore every man that takith Goddes name idly, or falsly swerith with his mouth, or elles takith on him the name of Crist, and callith himself a cristen man, and lyveth agaynst Cristes lyvyng and his teching, alle thay take Goddes name idly. Loke eek what saith seint Peter, Act. c°. iiij^to. *Non est aliud nomen sub cælo, etc.;* There is noon other name, saith seint Peter, under heven yeven to no men, in which thay may be saved, that is to sayn, but in the name of Jhesu Crist. Tak heede eek how precious is the name of Crist, as saith seint Poule, *ad Philippenses ij°. In nomine Jhesu, etc.* that in the name of Jhesu every knee of hevenly creatures, or erthely, or of helle, shulde bowe; for it is so hihe and so worshipfulle, that the cursed fende in helle sholde tremble to heeren it named. Thanne semeth it, that men that sweren so horribly by his blessed name, that thay despise it more boldely than dede the cursed Jewes, or elles the devel, that tremblith whan he heerith his name.

Now certis, since that swering (but if it be lawfully doon) is so hihly forbidden, moche wors is forswering falsely, and yit needeles.

What say we eek of hem that delite them in swering, and holden it a gentry or manly dede to swere grete othis? And what of them that of verray usage cease nought to swere grete othis, al be the cause not worth a strawe? Certes this is horrible synne. Sweryng sodeynly without avysement is

eek a gret synne. But let us now go to thilke horrible sweryng of adjuracioun and conjuraciouns, as doon these false enchauntours or nigromanciens in basines ful of water, or in a bright swerd, in a cercle, or in a fyr, or in the shulder bon of a sheep; I can not sayn, but that thay doon cursedly and damnably agains Christ, and the faith of holy chirche.

What saye we of them that bilieven on divinailes, as by flight or by nois of briddes or of bestes, or by sort, by geomancie, by dremes, by creaking of dores or crakking of howses, by gnawyng of rattis, and such maner wrecchidnes? Certis, al this thing is forbidden by God and holy chirche, for whiche thay ben accursed, til thay come to amendement, that on such filthe set there bileeve. Charmes for woundes or malady of men or of bestes, if thay take eny effect, it may be paradventure that God suffreth hit, for folk shulde yeve the more faith and reverence to his name.

Now wol I speke of lesynge, whiche generally is fals signifiaunce of word, in entent to deceyven his evencristen. Som lesyng is, of whiche ther cometh no avauntage to no wight; and som lesyng torneth to the ease or profit of som man, and to damage of another man. Another lesyng is, for to save his lif or his catel. Another lesyng cometh of delit for to lye, in which delit thay wolle forge a long tale, and paynte it with alle circumstaunces, wher as the ground of the tale i fals. Som lesyng cometh, for he wolde susteyne his word. Som lesyng cometh of rechelesnes withoute avisement, and semblable thinges.

Let us now touche the vice of flaterie, which cometh not gladly, but for drede, or for coveitise. Flaterie is generally wrongful preysing. Flaterers ben the develes nurses, that norisshen his children with mylk of flattery. For sothe Salamon saith, that flaterie is worse than detraccioun; for som tyme detraccioun makith an high man be the more humble, for he dredith detraccioun, but certes flaterie makith a man to enhaunsen his hert and his countenaunce. Flaterers ben the develes enchauntours, for thay make man to wene of himself that he is like to that he is nought like. Thay ben like Judas, that bitraied God; and thise flaterers bitrayen a man to selle him to his enemy, that is the devel. Flaterers ben the develes chapeleyns, that singen ay Placebo. I rekene flaterie in the vices of ire; for ofte tyme if oon man be wroth with another, thanne wol he flatere som man to mayntene him in his quarrel.

Speke we now of such cursyng as cometh of irous hert. Malisoun generally may be said every maner power of harm; such cursyng bireveth man fro the regne of God, as saith seint Poule. And ofte tyme such cursyng wrongfully retourneth agayn to hym that curseth, as a birde retourneth agayn to his owne nest. And over alle thinges men ought to eschewe to cursen there oune children, and give to the devel there offspring, as ferforth as in them is; certis it is gret peril and gret synne.

Let us thanne speke of chydynge and reproche, whiche be ful grete woundes in mannes hert, for they unsew the semes of frendshipe in mannes herte; for certis, scarcely may a man plainly be accordid with him that him openly revyled, reproved, and slandered; this is a ful grisly synne, as Crist saith in the Gospel. And tak keep now, that he that reproveth his neighbor, either he reproveth him by som harm of peyne, that he hath on his body, as leper, croked, harlotte; or by somme sinne that he doth. Nowe if he repreve him by harme of peyne, thanne tornith the reproef to Jhesu Crist; for peyne is sent by the righteous sending of God, and by his suffraunce, be it leprosy, or many other maladies; and if he repreve him uncharitably of sinne, as thou whoremonger, thou dronke harlot, and so forth, thanne aperteyneth that to the rejoysing of the devel, that ever hath joye that men doon synne. And certis, chidyng may nought come but out of a vileins herte, for after the abundaunce of the herte speketh the mouth ful ofte. And ye shal understonde, that loke by any way, whan any man shal chastise another, that he be war of chidyng or reprevyng; for trewely, save he be war, he may ful lightly quicken the fyr of anger and of wraththe, which that he shulde quenchen; and paraventure sleth, that he mighte chasten with benignité. For, as sayth Salamon, the amiable tonge is the tree of lif; that is to sayn, of life spirituel. And sothely, a bitter tonge sleth the spirit of him that repreveth, and also of him which is repreved. Lo, what saith seint Augustyn, ther is no thing so lik the fendes child, as he that ofte chideth. Seint Poule seith eek, a servaunt of God bihoveth nought to chide. And though that chidyng be a vileins thing bitwixe alle maner folk, yit is it certes more uncovenable bitwix a man and his wif, for ther is never rest. And therfore saith Salamon, an hous that is uncovered in rayn and droppyng, and a chidyng wyf, be alike. A man, that is in a dropping hous in many partes,

though he eschewe the dropping in oon place, it droppeth on him in another place; so farith it by a chydinge wyf, but she chide him in oon place, she wol chide him in another. And therfore better is a morsel of bred with joye, than an hous ful of delices with chyding, seith Salamon. Seint Poul saith, o ye wommen, be ye sugettis to youre housbondes as bihovith in God; and ye men, loveth youre wyves. Epistle to the Colossians, iij°.

After-ward speke we of scornyng, which is a wikked thing, and sinful, and namely whan he scornith a man for his goode workes; for certes, suche scorners faren lik the foule toode, that may nought endure the soote smel of the vine roote, whan it florishith. These scorners ben partyng felawes with the devel, for thay have joye whan the devel wynneth, and sorwe whan he loseth. Thay be adversaries of Jhesu Crist, for thay haten that he loveth, that is to saye, salvacioun of soule.

Speke we now of wikked counseil; for he that wickid counseil giveth he is a traytour, for he deceyveth him that trusteth in him, as Achitofel to Absalom. But natheles, yet is his wikkid counseil first against himself. For, as saith the wise man, every fals lyvyng hath his propreté in himself, that he that wil annoye another man, he annoyeth first himself. And men shul understonde, that men shulde nought take his counseil of fals folk, nor of angry folk, nor of grevous folk, nor of folk that loven specially too moche their oune profyt, nor in too moche worldly folk, namely, in counselyng of mannes soule.

Now cometh the synne of them that sowen and maken discord amonges folk, which is a synne that Crist hateth utterly; and no wonder is, for God diede for to make concord. And more shame do thay to Crist, than dede thay that him crucifiede. For God loveth bettre, that frendshipe be amonges folk, thanne he dide his owne body, which that ye gaf for unité. Therfore ben thay likned to the develes, that ever ben aboute to make discord.

Now comith the sinne of double tonge, suche as speken faire biforn folk, and wikkedly bihynde; or elles they make semblaunt as though thay speke of good entencioun, or ellis in game and play, and yit thay speke in wikked entent.

Now cometh the twisting of counseil, thurgh which a man is defamed; certes scarce may he restore that damage. Now cometh menace, that is an open foly; for he that ofte

menaceth, he threttith more than he may parfourme ful ofte tyme. Now cometh idele wordes, that is withoute profyt of him that spekith tho wordes, and eek of him that herkeneth tho wordes; or elles ydele wordes ben tho that ben needeles, or withouten entent of naturel profyt. And al be it that ydile wordes ben som tyme venial synne, yit shulde men doute them for we shuln yive rekenynge of them bifore God. Now comith jangeling, that may nought be withoute synne; and, as saith Salomon it is a signe of apert folie. And therfore a philosophre saide, whan men askid him how men shulde plese the poeple, and he answerde, do many good werkes, and spek fewe jangeles. After this cometh the synne of japers, that ben the develes apes, for thay maken folk to laughen at here japes or japerie, as folk doon at the gaudes of an ape; suche japes Saint Paul forbiddeth. Loke how that vertuous and holy wordes conforten them that travailen in the service of Crist, right so conforten the vilens wordes and knakkis and japeries them that traveyle in the service of the devyl. These ben the synnes that cometh of ire, and of other synnes many mo.

Remedium Contra Iram

Remedye agayns ire, is a vertue that men clepe mansuetude, that is deboneirté; and eek another vertue that men clepe pacience or sufferaunce. Debonaireté withdrawith and restreineth the stiringes and the movynges of mannys corrage in his herte, in such manere, that thai skippe not out by anger nor by ire. Suffraunce suffrith swetely al the annoyaunce and the wronges that men doon to man outward. Seint Jerom saith thus of debonairté, that it do non harm to no wight, nor saith; nor for noon harm that men doon nor sayn, he chafeth not agayns his resoun. This vertu cometh som tyme of nature; for, as saith the philosopher, man is a quik thing by nature, debonaire and tretable by goodnesse; but whan debonaireté is enformed of grace, than is it the more worth.

Pacience that is another remedie agains ire, is a vertu that suffreth swetely every mannes goodnes, and in not wroth for noon harm that is doon to him. The philosopher saith, that pacience is thilke vertue that suffrith deboneirly alle the outrages of adversité and every wickid word. This vertue makith a man lik to God, and makith him Goddes oune dere

child, as saith Crist. This vertu destroyeth thin enemy. And therfore saith the wise man, if thou wolt venquisch thin enemy lerne to suffre. And shou shalt understonde, that man suffrith foure maners of grevaunces in out-ward thinges, agains whiche he moot have foure maners of patience. The firste grevaunce is of wicked wordes. Thilke suffred Jhesu Crist, withoute grucching, ful paciently, whan the Jewes despised him and reproved him ful ofte. Suffre thou therfore paciently, for the wise man saith, if thou strive with a fool, though the fool be wroth, or though he laughhe, thou shalt have no rest. That other grevaunce out-ward is to have damage of thi catel. Ther agayn suffred Crist ful paciently, whan he was despoylid of al that he had in his lif, and that was but his clothis. The thridde grevaunce is a man to have harm in his body. That suffrede Crist ful paciently in al his passioun. The ferthe grevaunce is in outrageous labour in werkis; wherfore I say, that folk that maken there servauntz to travaile too grevously, or out of tyme, as on holy dayes, sothely thay doon greet synne. Here against suffrede Crist ful paciently, and taughte us pacience, whan he bar upon his blisful shulder the cros upon which he shulde suffre despitous deth. Here may men lerne to be pacient; for certes, nought oonly cristen men ben pacient for the love of Jhesu Crist, and for guerdoun of the blisful life that is durable, but the olde paynymes, that never were cristen, comaundedin and useden the vertu of pacience. A philosopher upon a tyme, that wolde have bete his disciple for his grete trespas, for which he was gretly moved, and brought a yerde to scourge the child, and whan the child saw the yerde, he sayde to his maister, "what thenke ye to do?" "I wolde bete the," quoth the maister, "for thi correccioun." "Forsothe," quoth the child, "ye oughte first correcte yoursilf, that have lest al youre pacience for the gilt of a child." "Forsothe," quoth the maister al wepyng, "thou saist soth; have thou the yerde, my deere sone, and correcte me for myn impacience." Of pacience cometh obedience, thurgh which a man is obedient to Crist, and to alle them to which he oughte to be obedient in Crist. And understonde wel, that obedience is parfyt, whan a man doth gladly and hastily with good herte utterly al that he sholde do. Obedience is generally to parforme the doctrine of God, and of his soveraignes, to whiche he oughte to ben obeissant in alle righteousness.

De Accidia

After the synne of envye and ire, now wol I speke of sloth; for envye blendith the hert of a man, and ire troublith a man, and sloth makith him hevy, thoughtful, and peevish. Envye and ire maken bitternes in herte, which bitternesse is moder of accidie, and bynimith the love of alle goodnes; thanne is accidie the anguische of a trouble hert. And seint Augustyn saith, it is anoye, it is anoye of goodenesse and anoye of harme. Certes this is a damnable synne, for it doth wrong to Jhesu Crist, in as mocht as it taketh the service that we oughte to do to Crist with alle diligence, as saith Salomon; but accidie doth noon such diligence. He doth alle thing with anoy, and with peevishness, slaknes, and excusacioun, and with ydelnes and unlust; for which the book saith, accursed be he that doth the service of God necligently. Than is accidie enemy to every astaat of man. For certes thestate of man is in thre maners; eythere it is thestate of innocence, as was thastate of Adam, biforn that he fel into synne, in which estate he is holden to worche, as in praising and honouryng of God. Another astat is thestate of sinful man; in which estate men ben holden to labore in praying to God for amendement of their synnes, and that he wolde graunte them to rise out of there synnes. Another estaat is thestate of grace, in which he is holde to werkis of penitence; and certes, to alle these thinges is accidie enemye and contrarie, for it loveth no busynes at al. Now certis, this foule synne accidie is eek a ful gret enemy to the maintenance of the body; for it hath no purveaunce against temporal necessité, for it for-slowthith, and forsluggith, and destroyeth alle goodes temporels by rechelesnes.

The ferthe thing is that accidie is like them that be in the peyne of helle, bycause of their slouthe and of their hevynes; for thay that ben damned, ben so bounde, that thay maye nought wel do nor wel thenke. Of accidie cometh first, that a man is annoyed and encombrid for to do eny goodnes and makith that God hath abhominacioun of such accidie, as saith seint Johan.

Now cometh slouthe, that wol suffre noon hardnes ne no penaunce; for sothely, slouthe is so tendre and so delicat, as saith Salomon, that he wol suffre no hardnes nor penaunce, and therfore he spoileth al that he doth. Agayns this roten

hertid synne of accidie and of slouthe shulden men exercise themself to do goode werkes and manly and vertuously get corrage wel to doo, thinking that oure Lord Jhesu Crist payeth every good dede, be it never so lyte. Usage of labour is a ful greet thing; for it makith, as saith seint Bernard, the laborer to have stronge armes and harde synewes; and slouthe maketh hem feble and tendre. Thanne cometh drede to bygynne to werke eny goode deedes; for certes, who that is enclined to don synne, he thinkith it is so gret emprise for to undertake to doon werkes of goodnes, and castith in his herte that the circumstaunces of goodnesse ben so grevous and so hard for to suffre, that he dar not undertake to do werkes of goodnesse, as saith seint Gregory.

Now cometh wanhope, that is, despair of the mercy of God, that cometh som tyme of to moche outrageous sorwe, and som tyme of to moche drede, ymagynynge that he hath do so moche synne that it wil not availe him, though he wolde repent him, and forsake synne; thurgh which despeir or drede, he abandounith al his herte to alle maner synne, as saith seint Augustin. Whiche damnable synne, if that it continue unto his lyves ende, it is clepped the synnyng of the holy gost. This horrible synne is so perilous, that he that is despaired, ther is no felonye, ne no synne, that he doutith for to do, as shewede wel by Judas. Certes, above alle synnes than is this synne most displesant to Crist, and most adversarie. Sothely, he that despeirith him, is like the coward recreaunt, that seith recreaunt withoute neede. Allas! allas! needeles is he recreaunt, and needeles despaired. Certes, the mercy of God is ever redy to the penitent, and is above alle his werkes. Allas! can not a man bythenk him on the Gospel of seint Luk, wher as Crist saith, that as wel shal ther be joye in heven upon a synful man that doth penitence, as upon nynety and nyne that ben rightful men that needen no penitence? Loke forther in the same Gospel, the joye and the fest of the goode man that hadde lost his sone, whan the sone with repentaunce was torned to his fader. Can not thay remembre eek that as saith seint Luk, xxiij°, how that the thef that was hangid biside Jhesu Criste, sayde, Lord, remembre of me, whan thou comest into thy Kingdom? For sothe saith Crist, to-day thou shalt be with me in paradis. Certis, ther is noon so horrible synne of man, that it may not in his lif be destroyed with penitence, thorugh vertue of the passioun of the deth of Crist. Allas!

what needith it man thanne to be despaired, since that his mercy is so redy and large? Aske and have. Thanne cometh somnolence, that is, sluggy slumbring, which makith a man ben hevy and dul in body and in soule, and this synne cometh of slouthe; and certes, the tyme that by way of resoun man shulde nought slepe, that is in the morning, but if ther were cause resonable. For sothely the morning tyde is most convenable to a man to say his prayers, and for to thenk upon his God, and to honoure God, and to geve almes to the pore that first cometh in the name of Crist. Lo what saith Salamon; who-so wol by the morwe arise and seeke me, shal fynde me. Than cometh negligence that rekkith of nothing. And how that ignoraunce be moder of alle harm, certis, negligence is the norice. Necligence cares not, whan he shal doon a thing, whethir he doo it wel or baddely.

Of the remedy of these tuo synnes, as saith the wise man, that he that dredith God, he sparith nought to do that he oughte to don; and he that loveth God, wol do diligence to plese God by his werkis and abounde himself, with alle his might, wel for to doon. Thanne cometh ydelnes, that is the yate of alle harmes. An ydil man is like an hous that hath noone walles; the develes may entre on every syde or shoot at him at discovert by temptaciouns on every syde. This ydelnes is the hold of alle wickid vileyns thoughtes, and of alle jangles, tryfles, and of alle ordure. Certes the heven is geven to them that wol laboure and nought to ydil folk. Eke David saith, that thay ben not in the labour of men, ne thay shul not be whiped with men, that is to sain, in purgatorie. Certis thanne semeth it that thay shal be tormentid with the devel in helle, but-if thay don penitence.

Thanne comith the synne that men clepe tarditas, as whan a man is so slow or tarying ere he wil torne to God; and certis, that is a gret foly. He is like him that fallith into the diche, and wol not arise. And this vice cometh of a fals hope, that he thinkith he shal lyve longe; but that hope fayleth ful ofte.

Thanne comith laches, that is, he that when he bigynneth any good werk, anoon he wol forlete it and stynte, as doon thay that have eny wight to governe, and take of them no more keep anoon when thay fynde eny contrarie or eny anoy. These ben the newe shepherdes, that leten her shep wityngely go renne to the wolf, that is in the breres, or care nothing for their oune governaunce. Of this cometh povert and de-

struccioun, bothe of spirituel and of temporel thinges. Thanne cometh a maner coldenesse, that freseth al the hert of man. Thanne cometh undevocioun thurgh which a man is so blunt, and as saith seint Bernard, he hath such a langour in soule, that he may neyther rede nor synge in holy chirche, nor heere nor thinke on devocioun in holy chirche, nor travayle with his hondes in no good werk, that is not to him unsavory and al apalled. Than waxith he slowe and slombry, and soone wol he be wroth, and soone is enclined to hate and to envye. Thanne comith the synne of worldly sorwe such as is clepid tristitia, that sleth man, as saith seint Poule. For certis such sorwe werkith to the deth of the soule and of the body also, for therof cometh, that a man is anoyed of his oune lif, which sorwe shorteth ful ofte the lif of a man, ere that his tyme is come by way of kynde.

Remedium Contra Accidiam

Agains this horrible synne of accidie, and the braunches of the same, ther is a vertu that is cleped fortitudo or strengthe, that is, an affeccioun thurgh which a man despiseth alle noyous thinges. This vertu is so mighty and so vigurous, that it dar withstonde mightily the devel, and wisely kepe himself from perils that ben wicked, and wrastil agains the assautes of the devel; for it enhaunsith and enforceth the soule, right as accidie abateth it and makith it feble; for this fortitudo may endure with long sufferaunce the travailes that be convenable. This vertu hath many species; the first is cleped magnanimité, that is to sayn gret corrage. For certis ther bihoveth gret corrage agains accidie, lest that it swolwe not the soule by the synne of sorwe, or destroye it by wanhope. This vertu makith folk undertake harde and grevous things by her owne wille, willfuly and resonably. And for als moche as the devel fighteth agaynst a man more by cunning and by sleight than by strengthe, therfore many a man shal ayeinstonde him by witte, and by resoun, and by discrecioun. Thanne is ther the vertu of faith, and hope in God and in his seintes, to acheven and to acomplice the goode werkes, in the whiche he purposith fermely to continue. Thanne cometh surety or sikernes, and that is whan a man doutith no travaile in tyme comyng of good werk that a man hath bygonne. Thanne cometh magnificence, that is to saye, whan a man doth and parformith grete werkes of goodnesse

that he hath bygonne, and that is thend why that men shulden do goode werkes. For in the accomplishing of grete goode werkes lith the grete guerdoun. Thanne is ther constaunce, that is stablenes of corrage, and this shulde ben in herte by stedefast faith, and in mouthe and in berying, and in cheer, and in deede. Eek ther ben mo special remedies agayns accidie, in dyvers werkis, and in consideracioun of the peyne of helle and of the joye of heven, and in the trust of the hyhe grace of the holy gost, that wil geve him might to parforme his good entent.

De Avaritia

After accidie I wil speke of avarice, and of coveytise; of whiche synne saith seint Poule, that the roote of alle eveles and harmes is coveytise. For sothely whan that the hert of man is confoundid in itself and troublid, and that the soule hath lost the comfort of God, thanne seekith he an ydel solas of worldly thinges. Avarice, after the descripcioun of seint Austyn, is a likerousnes in hert to have erthely thinges. Some other folk sayn, that avarice is for to purchase many erthely thinges, and no thing geve to them that have neede. And understonde, that avarice stont not oonly in lond nor in catel, but som tyme in science and in glorie, and every maner of outrageous thinges is avarice or covetyse. And the difference bytwixe avarice and coveytise is this: coveitise is for to coveyte suche thinges as thou hast not; and avarice is to withholde and kepe suche thinges as thou hast, withouten rihtful nede. Sothely, this avarice is a synne that is ful damnable, for al holy writ curseth it, and spekith agayn that vice, for it doth wrong to Jhesu Crist; for it bireveth him the love that men to him owen, and turnith it bakward agains al resoun, and makith that the avarous man hath more hope in his catel than in Jhesu Crist, and doth more observaunce in kepynge of his tresour, than he doth to the service of Jhesu Crist. And therfore saith seint Poule, *ad Ephes.* that an averous man is in the thraldom of ydolatrie.

What difference is ther bitwen an ydolater and an avarous man, but that an ydolater peradventure hadde but an idol or tuo, and the avaricious man hath monye? for certes, every floreine in his coffre is his idol. And certes, the synne of idolatry is the firste thing that God forbiddeth in the ten comaundementz, as berith witnes in Exod. cap. xx, Thou

shalt have noone false goddes biforn me, nor thou shalt make to thee no graven thing. Thus is he an averous man, that loveth his tresor toforn God, and an ydolater. Thurgh this cursed synne of avarice and coveytise comen these harde lordshipes, thurgh whiche men ben destreyned by talliages, custumes, and cariages, more than there dueté of resoun is; and elles take thay of there bondemen amercimentes, whiche mighte more resonably ben callid extorciouns than mercymentis. Of whiche mersyments and raunsonyng of bondemen, some lordes stywardes seyn, that it is rightful, for as moche as a cherl hath no temporel thing that it is not his lordes, as thay sayn. But certes, thise lordeshipes doon wrong, that bireven here bondemen thinges that thay never yave them. *Augustinus de Civitate Dei, libro* ix. Soth is that the condicioun of thraldom, and the firste cause of thraldom is for sin. Genes. v.

Thus may ye seen, that the gilt deserved thraldom, but not nature. Wherfore these lordes shulden nought to moche glorifie in there lordshipes, sith that by naturel condicioun thay ben nought lordes over here thralles, but for that thraldom com first by the desert of synne. And forther-over, ther as the lawe sayth, that temporel goodes of bondefolk been the goodes of their lordshipes; ye, that is to understonde, the goodes of the emperour, to defend them in there right, but not to robbe them nor to steal from them. And therfore seith Seneca, thi prudence shulde live benignely with thi thrallis. Thilke that thay clepe thralles, ben Goddes poeple; for humble folk ben Cristes frendes; thay ben home friends with the Lord. Thenk eek as of such seed as cherles springen, of such seed springe lordes; as wel may the cherl be saved as the lord. The same deth that takith the cherl, the same deth taketh the lord. Wherefore I rede, do riht so with thi cherle as thou woldist thi lord dide with thee, if thou were in his plyt. Every sinful man is a cherl as to synne. I counsel thee certes, thou lord, that thou werke in such a wise with thy cherles that thay rather love thee than drede thee. I wot wel, ther is degre above degre, as resoun is and skil, that men don her devoir ther as it is dewe; but certes, extorciouns, and despit of oure undirlinges, is damnable.

And forthermore understonde wel, that conquerours or tyrauntes maken ful ofte thralles of them that born be of as royal blood as be thay that them conqueren. This name of cherldom was never erst known til Noe sayde that his sone

Chanaan shulde be thral of his bretheren for his synne. What say we thanne of them that rob and doon extorciouns to holy chirche? Certis, the swerdes that men yeven first to a knight whan he is newe dubbyd, signifieth faith, and that he shulde defende holy chirche, and not robbe hit ne pill hit; and who so doth ys traitour to Crist. And as seith seint Austin, thay ben the develes wolves, that stranglen the sheep of Jhesu Crist, and doon wors than wolves; for sothely, whan the wulf hath ful his wombe, he stintith to strangle sheep; but sothly, the pilours and the destroyers of the goodes of holy chirche ne doon nought so, for thai stinte never to pile. Now as I have sayd, sith so is, that synne was first cause of thraldom, thanne is it thus, that ilke tyme that al this world was in synne, thanne was al this world in thraldom, and in subjecciouu; but certis, sith the tyme of grace com, God ordeynede that somme folk shulde be more high in estaate and in degre, and somme folkes more lowe, and that everich shulde be served in there estate and in degree. And therfore in somme contrees where thay ben thralles, whan thay have turned them to the faith, thay make there thralles free out of thraldom. And therfor certis the lord oweth to his man, that the man owith to the lord. The pope callith himself servaunt of servaunts of God. But for as moche as thestaat of holy chirche mighte not have ben, nor the commune profit mighte nought have ben kepte, nor pees nor reste in erthe, but-if God had ordeyned som man of heiher degre, and some men of lower, therfore was soveraignté ordeyned to kepe, and to mayntene, and defende their underlynges or their subjectis in resoun, as ferforth as it lith in their power, and not to destroye nor confounde them. Wherfore I say, that thilke lordes that be like wolves, that devouren the possessioun or the catel of pore folk wrongfully withoute mercy or mesure, thay shul receyve by the same mesure that thay han mesured to pover folk the mercy of Jhesu Crist, but-if it be amendid. Now cometh deceit bitwixe marchaunt and marchaunt. And thou shalt understonde that marchaundise is in tuo maneres, that oon is bodily and that other is gostly; that oon is honest and lawful, and that other is dishonest and unlawful. Of thilke bodily marchaundise that is honest and leful is this, that where as God hath ordeyned that a regne of a cuntre is suffisaunt to himself, thanne is it honest and leful that of the abundaunce of this contre the men helpe another cuntre

that is more needy; and therfore ther moote be marchauntz to bringe fro that oon cuntre to that other their marchaundise. That other marchaundise, that men hauntyn with fraude, and treccherie, and deceit, with lesynges and fals othis, is cursed and damnable. Spirituel marchaundize is proprely symonie, that is entent and desire to buy thing spirituel, that is, thing that apperteyneth to the seintuarie of God, and to the cure of the soule. This desire, if so be that a man do his diligence to parforme it, al be it that his desir take noon effect, yit is it to him a dedly synne; and if he be ordrid, he is irreguler. Certis, symonye is called from Symon Magus, that wolde have bought for temporel catel the gifte that God had given by the holy gost to seint Petir and to thapostlis; and therfor understonde, that bothe he that sellith and he that buyeth thinges spirituеles be cleped symonials, be it by catel, be it by procurement, or by fleisshly prayere of his frendes, either of fleisshly frendes or spirituel frendes; fleisshly in tuo maneres, as by kyndrede or other frendes. Sothely, if thay praye for him that is not worthy and able, if he take the benefice it is symonie; and if he be worthy and able, it is non. That other maner is, whan man, or woman, prayen for folk to avaunce them oonly for wikked fleisshly affeccioun that thay have unto the persone, and that is foul symonye. But certis, in services, for whiche men geven thinges spirituels unto their servauntes, it must be understonde, that the service must be honest, and ellis not, and eek that it be withoute bargaynynge, and that the persone be able. For, as saith seint Damase, alle the synne of this world, compared with this synne, is a thing of nought, for it is the gretteste synne that may be after the synne of Lucifer and of Antecrist; for by this synne God forlosith the chirche and the soule, that he boughte with his precious blood, by them that geven chirches to them that be not digne, for thay putten in theves, that stelen the soules of Jhesu Crist, and destroyen his patrimoigne. By suche undigne prestis and curates have ignorant men lasse reverence of the sacrament of holy chirche; and suche geveres of chirches putten out the children of Crist, and putten into the chirche the develes oune sones; thay sellen soules (that is the lambes they shulde kepe) to the wolf that stranglith them; and therfore shul thay never have part of the pasture of lambes, that is, the blisse of heven.

Now cometh hazardrie with his appertenaunce, as tables

and rafles, of whiche cometh deceit, fals othis, chidynges, and alle raveynes, blasphemyng, and deneying of God and hate of his neighebors, wast of goodes, myspendinge of tyme, and som tyme manslaughter. Certes, hazardours may not be withoute gret synne, whil they haunte that craft. Of avarice cometh eek lesynges, thefte, and fals witnesse and fals othes. And ye shul undirstonde that these ben grete synnes, and expressly agains the comaundementz of God, as I have sayd. Fals witnesse is in word and eek in dede; in word as for to bireve thin neighebor his good name by thy false witnessinge, or bireve him his catel or his heritage by thy false witnesse, whan thou for ire, or for meede, or for envie, berest fals witnes, or accusist him, or excusist him by thy false witnes, or ellis excusist thiself falsly. Ware you, questemongers and notaries. Certis, for fals witnessynge was Susanna in ful gret sorwe and peyne, and many another mo. The synne of thefte is eek expresse agayns Goddes hestis, and that in tuo maners, coporel and spirituel; corporel, as for to take thy neighebours catel agayns his wille, be it by force or by sleight; be it by mette or by mesure; by stelynge eek of fals enditements upon him; and in borwyng of thin neighebores catelle in entent never to pay, and in semblable thinges. Spirituel thefte is sacrilege, that is to sayn, hurtynge of holy thinges, or of thing sacred to Crist. Sacrilege is in tuo maneres; that oon is by resoun of holy place, as chirches or chircheyards; for whiche every vileins synne that men doon in suche places may be clepid sacrilege, or every violence in semblable place; that other maner is as those that withdrawen falsly the rentes and rightes that longen to holy chirche; and generally, sacrilege is to reve holy thing fro holy place, or unholy thing out of holy place, or holy thing out of unholy place.

Remedium Contra Avariciam

Now shul ye understonde that the relevynge of avarice is misericorde and pité largely taken. And men might axen, why that misericord and pité is relievyng of avarice; certes, the avaricious man shewith no pité nor misericorde to the needeful man. For he delitith him in the kepyng of his tresor, and nought in the rescuing nor relievyng of his even-cristen. And therfore speke I first of misericord. Thanne is misericord, as saith the philosopher, a vertu, by which the

corrage of a man is stired by the myseise of him that is myseysed. Upon which misericorde folwith pytie, in parformynge of chariteable werkis of mercie, helping and comfortinge him that is miseased. And certes, these moven men to the misericord of Jhesu Crist, that gaf himself for oure gilt, and suffrede deth for misericord, and forgaf us oure original synne, and therby relessid us fro peyne of helle, and lessened the peynes of purgatorie by penitence, and geveth grace wel to do, and at the laste the joye of heven. The species of misericorde ben for to love, and for to give, and eek for to forgive and for to relesse, and for to have pité in herte, and compassioun of the meschief of his even cristen, and eek chastize ther as neede is. Another maner of remedye agayns avarice, is resonable largesse; but sothely here bihovith the consideracioun of the grace of Jhesu Crist, and of the temporel goodes, and eek of the goodes durable that Crist gaf us, and eek to have remembraunce of the deth that he shal resceyve, he knoweth not whanne, wher ne how; and eke he shal forgo al that he hath, save oonly that he hath dispendid in goode werkes.

But for as moche as some folk ben unresonable, men oughte to eschiewe fole-largesse, that men clepen wast. Certes, he that is fool-large, he giveth nought his catel, but he loseth his catel. Sothely, what thing that he giveth for vayngloríe, as to mynstrals, and to folk for to bere his renoun in the world, he hath synne therof, and noon almes; certes, he losith foule his goodes, that sekith with the gift of his goode no thing but synne. He is like to an hors that sekith rather to drynke drovy watir, and trouble, than for to drinke watir of the welle that is cleer. And for as moche as thay give where thay shulde not give, to them appendith thilke malisoun that Crist shal give at the day of doom to them that shal be damned.

De Gula

After avarice cometh glotenye, which is expresse eke agayns the comaundement of God. Glotenye is unresonable and desordeyned coveytise to ete and to drynke or elles to done ynouhe to the unmesurable or disordeyn covetyse to ete and to drinke. This synne corruptid al this world, as is wel shewed in the synne of Adam and of Eva. Loke eek what saith scint Poul of glotouns; many folk so, saith he,

gon, of whiche I have ofte said to you, and now I say it wepyng, that thei be thenemyes of the cros of Crist, of whiche thende is deth, and of whiche there wombe is there God and there glorie; in confusioun of them that so saveren erthely thinges. He that is accustomed to this sinne of glotoyne, he may no sinne withstande, he moste be in servage of alle vices, for it is the develes horde, where he hideth him inne and resteth. This synne hath many species. The firste is dronkenes, that is thorrible sepulture of mannes resoun; and therfore whan man is dronken, he hath lost his resoun; and this is dedly synne. But shortly, whan that a man is not wont to strong drinke, and paraventure knowith not the strengthe of the drynk, or hath feblesse in his heed, or hath travayled, thurgh which he drynkith the more, and be sodeynly caught with drynke, it is no dedly synne, but venial. The secounde species of glotenye is, whan the spirit of a man wexith al trouble for drunkenesse, and bireveth him his witte and his discressioun. The thridde species of glotouns is, when a man devoureth his mete, and hath no rightful maner of etyng. The ferthe is, whan thurgh the grete abundance of his mete, the humours of his body be distemprid. The fifte is, forgetelnesse by to moche drinking, for which a man somtyme forgetith by the morwe what he dide at eve, or on the night bifore.

In other maner ben distinct the species of glotonye, after seint Gregory. The firste is, for to ete or drynke byfore tyme to ete. The secound is, whan man giveth him too delicate mete or drinke. The thridde is, whanne man takith too moche therof over mesure. The ferthe is, curiosité, with gret entent to make and apparayle his mete. The fifte is, for to ete too gredely. These be the fyve fyngres of the develes hand, by which he drawith folk to synne.

Remedium Contra Gulam

Agayns glotonye the remedie is abstinence, as saith Galien; but that holde I nought meritorie, if he do it oonly for the helth of his body. Seint Austyn wol that abstinence be don for vertu, and with pacience. Abstinence, he saith, is litil worth, but if a man have good wille therto, and but it be enforced by pacience and by charité, and that men doon it for Goddes sake, and in hope to have the blisse of heven. The felawes of abstinence ben temperaunce, that holdith the

mene in alle thinges; eek shame, that eschiewith al dishonesté; suffisaunce, that seeketh noone riche metes ne drynkes, ne careth not for outrageous apparaillyng of mete; mesure also that restreyneth by resoun the appetit of etyng; sobernes also, that restreyneth the outrage of drinke; sparynge also, that restreyneth the delicat ese to sitte longe atte his mete and softely, wherfore summe folk stonden of there owen wille to ete, because they wol ete atte lasse laysir.

De Luxuria

After glotonye thanne cometh leccherie, for these two synnes ben so neih cosyns, that ofte tyme thay wol not departe. *Unde Paulus ad Ephes., nolite inebriari vino in quo est luxuria*, etc. God wot this synne is ful displesaunt thing to God, for he sayde himself, Do no leccherie. And therfore he putte gret peyne agayn this synne. For in the olde law, if a womman thral were take in this synne, she sholde be beten with staves to the deth; and if she were a gentilwomman, she shulde be slayn with stoones; and if she were a bisshoppis doughter, she shulde be brent by Goddis comaundement. Fortherover, for the synne of leccherie God drouned al the world at the flood, and after that he brente fyve citees with thonder and lightning, and sonk them into helle.

Now let us thanne speke of thilke stynkyng synne of leccherie, that men clepen advoutry, that is of weddid folk, that is to sayn, if that oon of them be widded, or elles bothe. Seint Johan saith, that advouteris shuln be in helle in watir brennyng of fyr and of brimston; in fyr for the leccherie, in brimston for the stynk of their ordure. Certis the brekyng of this sacrament is an horrible thing; hit was makid of God himself in Paradis, and confermed of Jhesu Crist, as witnesseth seint Mathew; a man shal lete fader and mooder, and take him to his wif, and thay shul ben two in oon fleish. This sacrament bitokeneth the knyttyng togider of Crist and of holy chirche. And nat oonly that God forbad advotrie in dede, but eek he comaundede, that thou sholdest not coveyte thy neyhebors wif. In this heste, seith seint Austyn, is forboden al maner coveytise to do leccherie. Lo what seith seint Mathew in the Gospel, that who-so seth a womman, to coveytise of his lust, he hath doon lecchery with hir in his herte. Here may ye se, that nought oonly the dede of this

synne is forboden, but eek the desir to do that synne. This cursed synne annoyeth grevously them that it haunten: and first to there soule, for he obligith it to synne and to pyne of the deth that is durable; unto the body annoyeth it grevously also, for it dreyeth him and wastith him, and spoileth him, and of his blood he makith sacrifice to the devel of helle; it wastith eek his catel and his substaunce. And certes, if that it be a foul thing a man to waste his catel on wommen, yit is it a fouler thing, whan that for such ordure wommen dispende upon men there catel and there substaunce. This synne, as saith the prophete, byreveth man and womman their good fame and al there honour, and it is ful pleasaunt to the devel; for therby wynneth he the moste pray of this world. And right as a marchaunt deliteth him most in chaffare that he hath most avauntage of, right so delitith the feend in this ordure.

This is the other hond of the devel, with fyve fyngres, to cacche the poeple to his vilonye. The firste fynger is the foule lokyng of the foule womman and of the foule man, that sleth right as a basiliskoc sleth folk by the venym of his sight; for the coveytise of eyen folwith the coveytise of the herte. The secounde fynger is the vileynes touchinge in wikkid manere. And therfore saith Salamon, that who-so touchith and handelith a womman, he farith lik him that handelith the scorpioun, that styngith and sodeinly sleeth thurgh his envenemynge; or as who so touchith warm picche, it soileth his fyngres. The thridde is foule wordes, that farith lik fyr, that right anoon brenneth the herte. The ferthe is the kissyng; and trewely he were a greet fool that wolde kisse the mouth of a brennyng oven or of a forneys; and more fooles ben thay that kyssen in vilonye, for that mouth is the mouth of helle; and namely thise olde dotard fooles, yit wol thay kisse and smater them, though thay maye nought do. Certes thay ben like to houndes; for an hound when he cometh to a roser, or by other busches, though he may nought pisse, yet wil he heve up his leg and make a countenaunce to pisse. And for that many man weneth he may not synne for no licorousnes that he doth with his wif, certis that oppinioun is fals; God wot a man may sle himself with his owne knyf, and make himself dronk of his oughne tonne. Certis, be it wif, or child, or eny worldly thing, that he lovyth biforn God, it is his idol, and he is an ydolastre. Man shulde love his wyf by discres-

cioun, paciently and attemperelly, and thanne is she, as it were, his suster. The fyfte fynger of the develes hond, is the stynkynge dede of leccherie. Certes the fyve fyngres of glotonye the devel put in the wombe of a man; and his fyve fyngres of lecchery bygripeth him by the reynes, for to throwe him into the fourneys of helle, there as they shuln have the fyr and the wormes that ever shal lasten, and wepyng and wayling, and sharp hunger and thurst, and grislines of develes, that shul al to-tere them withoute respit and withouten ende. Of leccherie, as I sayde, come divers species: as fornicacioun, that is bitwene man and womman that ben nought maried, and this is dedly synne, and against nature. Al that is enemy and destruccioun to nature, is agayns nature. Par fay the resoun of a man tellith him wel that it is dedly synne, for als moche as God forbad leccherie. And seint Poule gevith them that place that is due to no wight but them that doon synne dedly. Another synne of lecchery is, for to bireve a mayden of hir maydenhode; for he that so doth, certes he casteth a mayden out of the highest degre that is in the present lif, and birevith hir thilke precious fruyt that the book clepith the hundrid fruyt,—I can yeve it noon other name in English, but in Latyn it is i-clepid *centesimus fructus* (*secundum Hieronimum contra Jovinianum*). Certes he that so doth, is cause of many harmes and vilenyes, mo than eny man can rekene; right as he som tyme is cause of alle the damages that bestis doon in the feeld, that brekith the hegge of the closure, thurgh which he destroyeth that may not be restored; for certes no more may maydenhode be restored, than an arm, that is smyten fro the body, retourne agayn to waxe; she may have mercy, this wot I wel, if she have wille to do penitence, but never shal it be but that she is not corrupt. And al be it so that I have spoke somwhat of advoutre, yit is it good to speke of mo perils that longen to advoutre, for to eschiewe that foule synne. Advoutrie, in Latyn, is for to sayn, approching of other mannes bed, thorugh the which those that whilom were oon fleish, abaundone there bodyes to other persones. Of this synne, as saith the wise man, many harmes cometh thereof; first, brekyng of faith; and certes faith is the keye of cristendom, and whan that faith is broke and lorn, sothely cristendom is lorn, and stont veyn and withouten fruyt. This synne is eek a theef, for thefte is generally to speke to reve a wight his thing agayns his wille. Certis, this is the

foulest thefte that may be, whan a womman stelith hir body from hire housbonde, and giveth it to hire lover to defoule hire, and stelith hir soule fro Crist, and gevith it to the devel. This is a fouler thefte than for to breke a chirche and stele chalises, for these advouterers breke the temple of God spirituelly, and stelen the vessel of grace, that is the body and the soule; for which Jhesu Crist shal destroyen hem, as saith seint Poule. Sothely of this thefte doutyde gretly Joseph, whan that his lordes wyf prayde him of vilonye, whan he saide, "Lo, my lady, how my lord hath take to me under my warde al that he hath in this world, and no thing of his thinges is oute of my power, but oonly ye that ben his wyf; and how shuld I do thanne this wikkidnes, and synne so horribly agayns God, and my Lord? God it forbede!" Alas! al too litel is such trouthe now i-founde. The thridde harm is the filthe, thurgh which thay breken the comaundement of God, and defoule the auctour of there matrimonye, that is Crist. For certis, in so moche as the sacrament of mariage is so noble and so digne, so moche is it the gretter synne for to breke it; for God makide mariage in Paradis in thestat of innocence, to multiplie mankynde to the service of God, and therfore is the brekyng therof the more grevous, of which breking cometh fals heires ofte tymes, that wrongfully occupien mennes heritage; and therfore wolde Crist putte them out of the kingdom of heven, that is heritage to goode folk. Of this breking cometh eek ofte tyme that folk unwar wedden or synnen with her kynrede; and namely these harlottis, that haunten bordels of these foule wommen, that mowe be likened to a comune gonge, where as men purgen her entrayles of her ordure. What saye we eke of putours, that lyven by the orrible synne of putrie, and constreyne wymmen, ye, som tyme his oughne wyf or his child, as don these baudes, to yelde hem a certeyn rente of here bodily putrie? certes, these ben cursede synnes. Understondeth eek that avoutrie is set gladly in the ten comaundements bitwixe manslaughter and thefte, for it is the grettest thefte that may be, for it is thefte of body and soule, and it is lik homicidie, for it kerveth a-tuo them that first were makid oon fleish. And therfore by the olde lawe of God thay sholde be slayn, but natheles, by the lawe of Jhesu Crist, that is the lawe of pité, whan he sayde to the womman that was founde in advoutrie, and shulde have ben slayn with stoones aftir the wille of the Jewes, as was their law,

"Go," quoth Jhesu Crist, "and haue no more wille to synne or wilne no more to do synne;" sothely, the vengeance of avouterye is awardid to the peyne of helle, but-if it be destourbed by penitence. Yit ben ther mo species of this cursed synne, as whan that oon of them is religious, or ellis bothe, or for folk that ben entred into ordre, as sub-dekin, or dekin, or prest, or hospitalers; and ever the higher that he be in ordre, the gretter is the synne. The thinges that gretly aggreggith her synne, is the brekyng of here avow of chastité, whan thay resceyved the ordre; and fortherover is soth, that holy ordre is chef of alle the tresor of God, and is a special signe and mark of chastité, to shewe that thay be joyned to chastité, which that is the moste precious lif that is. And eek these ordred folk be specially tytled to God, and of the special servants of God; of whiche whan thay don dedly synne, thay ben the special traytours of God and of his poeple, for they lyven of the peple to praye for the peple, and whil thay ben suche traytours there prayer avayleth not to the poeple. Prestis ben aungels, as by the dignité of there service; but for sothe seint Poul saith, that Sathanas transformeth him into an aungel of light. Sothely, the prest that hauntith dedly synne, he may be likened to the aungel of derknes, transformed into the aungel of light; and he semeth aungel of light, but for sothe he is aungil of derknes. Suche prestes ben the sones of Helie, as shewith in the book of Kinges, that thay were the sones of Belial, that is, the devel. Belial is to saye, withoute juge, and so faren thay; thay thynke hem fre, and have no juge, no more than hath a fre bole, that takith which cow that him liketh in the toun. So faren thay by wommen; for right as a fre bole is y-nough for al a toun, right so is a wikked prest corrupcioun y-nough for al a parisch, or for al a contray. These prestes, as saith the book, ne conne not ministere the mistery of presthode to the poeple, nor God knowe thay not; thay holde them nought apayed, as saith the book, of soden fleissch that was to hem offred, but thay tooke by force the fleissh that is raw. Certes, so these shrewes holde them not appayed with roasted fleissh and sod fleissh, with whiche the poeple feeden hem in gret reverence, but thay wil have raw fleish of folkes wyves and there doughters. And certes, these wommen that consenten to there harlotrie, don gret wrong to Crist and to holy chirche, and to alle saints, and to alle soules, for thay bireven alle these them that shulde

worshipe Crist and holy chirche and praye for cristen soules. And therfore have suche prestis, and there lemmans eeke that consenten to there leccherie, the malisoun of al the court cristian, til thay come to amendement. The thridde spice of advoutry is som tyme bitwix a man and his wif, and that is, whan thay take noon reward in their assembling but oonly to the fleishly delit, as saith seint Jerom, and ne rekke of no thing but that thay be assemblid bycause that thay ben maried; al is good y-nough as thinkith hem. But in suche folk hath the devel power, as saith the aungel Raphael to Thoby, for in there assemblyng, thay putten Jhesu Crist out of their herte, and given themself to alle ordure. The ferthe species is the assemblynge of them that ben of there kyndrede, or of them that ben of oon affinité, or elles with them with whiche there fadres or there kyndrede have deled in the synne of leccherie; this synne makith hem like houndes, that taken noon heede of kyndrede. And certes, parenteal is in tuo maneres, eyther gostly or fleisshly. Gostly, as for to dele with her gossib; for right so as he that engendrith a child, is his fleisshly fader, right so is his godfather his fader espirituel; for which a womman may in no lasse synne assemble with hir gossib, than with hire oune fleishly fader or brother. The fifte species is thilke abhominable synne, of which that no man scarce oughte to speke ne write, natheles it is openly rehersed in holy wryt. But though that holy writ speke of horrible synne, certes holy writ may not be defouled, no more than the sonne that shyneth on a dongehul. Another synne appertieneth to lecchery, that cometh in sleping, and this synne cometh ofte to them that ben maydenes, and eek to them that ben corrupte; and this synne men clepen pollucioun, that cometh in foure maners; som tyme it cometh of languisschynge of the body, for the humours ben too rank and too abundaunt in the body of man; som tyme of infirmité, for the feblenesse of the vertu retentyf, as phisik maketh mencioun; and some tyme for surfete of mete and drynke; som tyme of vileins thoughtes that ben enclosed in mannes mynde whan he goth to slepe, whiche may not ben withoute synne; fro whiche a man moste kepe him wisely, or elles may men synne grevously.

Remedium Contra Luxuriam

Now cometh the remedye against lecchery, and that is generally chastité and continence that restreyneth alle the disordeigne movynges that comen of fleishly talentes; and ever the gretter meryt shal he have that most restreyneth fires of ordure of this synne; and this is in tuo maneres; that is to sayn, chastité of mariage, and chastite of widewhede. Now shalt thou understonde, that matrimoigne is leful assemblynge of man and womman, that receyven by virtu of this sacrement the bond thurgh which thay maye not be departid in al there lif, that is to saye, while thay lyven bothe. This, as saith the boke, is a ful gret sacrement: God makid it (as I have said) in Paradis, and wolde himself be born in mariage; and for to hallow mariage he was at the weddyng wher as he turnede watir into wyn, which was the firste miracle that he wrought in erth biforn his disciples. The trewe effect of mariage clensith fornicacioun, and replenishith holy chirche of good lynage, for that is the ende of mariage, and it chaungith dedly synne into venyal synne bituixe them that be weddid, and maketh the hertes al one, as wel as the bodyes. This is verray mariage that was first blessed by God, ere that the synne bigan, whan naturel lawe was in his righte poynt in Paradis: and it was ordeyned, that oon man shulde have but oon womman, and oon womman but oon man, as saith seint Augustyn, by many resouns. First, for mariage is figured bitwixe Crist and holy chirche; another is, for a man is heed of a womman (algate by ordinaunce it shulde be so); for if a womman hadde mo men than oon, than shulde she have mo hedes than oon, and that were an horrible thing biforn God; and eek a womman myghte nought please many folk al at oones; and also ther shulde never be pees and rest among them, for everich wolde aske his oune thing. And fortherover, no man shulde knowe his oune engendrure, nor who shulde have his heritage, and the womman sholde be the lasse loved fro the tyme that she were joyned to many men.

Now cometh how that a man shuldebere him with his wif, and namely in tuo thinges, that is to sayn, in sufferaunce and in reverence, and that shewede Crist when he made first womman. For he made hire not of the heed of Adam, for she shulde not to gret lordschipe have; for ther as the womman hath the maistry, she makith too moche disaray;

ther needith noon ensample of this, the experience that we have day by day oughte to suffice. Also certes, God made nought womman of the foot of Adam, for she ne sholde nought be holden too lowe, for she can not paciently suffre. But God made womman of the ribbe of Adam, for womman shulde be felawe unto man. Man shulde bere him to his wif in faith, in trouthe, and in love; as saith seint Poule, that a man shulde love his wif, as Crist loved holy chirche, that loved it so wele that he deyede for it; so shulde a man for his wyf, if it were neede.

Now how that a womman shulde be subject to hir housbonde, that tellith seint Peter; first in obedience. And eek, as saith the decré, a womman that is a wif, as longe as she is a wif, she hath noon auctorité to swere nor to bere witnesse, withoute leve of hir housbonde, that is hir lord; algate he shulde be so by resoun. She shulde eek serve him in al honesté, and be temperate of hir array. I wot wel that thay shulde sette there entent to please their housbondes, but nought by there quaintness of array. Seint Jerom saith, that wyves that ben arrayed in silk and in purpre, can nought clothe them in Jhesu Crist. Loke what saith saint Johan eek in the same matier. Seint Gregori saith eek, that no wight sekith precious clothing nor array, but oonly for veynglorie to be honoured the more biforn the poeple. It is a gret folly, a womman to have fair array outward, and hirsilf to be foul in-ward. A wyf shulde eek be mesurable in lokyng, and in beryng, and in laughing, and discrete in alle hir wordes and hir dedes, and above alle worldly thinges she shulde love hir housebonde with al hire herte, and to him to be trewe of hir body; so sholde an housebonde eeke be trewe to his wif; for since that al the body is the housbondes, so shulde there herte be, or elles ther is bitwixe them tuo, as in that, no parfyt mariage. Thanne shal men understonde, that for three thinges a man and his wyf may fleishly assemble. The first is, in entent of engendrure of children, to the service of God, for certis that is the cause fynal of matrimoyne. The secounde cause is, to yelden everych of them unto other the dette of his body; for neyther of hem hath power of his oune body. The thridde is, for to eschewe leccherie and vilenye. The ferthe for sothe is dedly synne. As to the firste, it is meritory; the secounde also, for, as saith the decré, that she hath merite of chastité, that yeldith to hir housebonde the dette of hir body, ye though it be agayn hir

likyng and the lust of hir hert. The thridde maner is venial synne; and trewly, scarsly may eny of these be withoute venial synne, for the corrupcioun and for the delit. The ferthe maner is for to understonde, as if thay assemble oonly for amorous love, and for noon of the forsayde causes, but for to accomplise thilke brennynge delyt, thay rekke never how ofte, sothely it is dedly synne; and yit, with sorwe, some folk wole more peyn them for to doon, than to their appetit suffiseth.

The secounde maner of chastité is to be a clene widewe, and to eschewe the embrasynges of men, and desiren the embrasynges of Jhesu Crist. These be those that have been wyves, and have forgon there housebondes, and eek wommen that have doon leccherie, and be relieved by penitence. And certis, if that a wyf coude kepe hir al chast, by licence of hir housebonde, so that she geve non occasioun that he agilt, it were to hir a gret merit. Thise maner wymmen, that observen chastité, moste be clene in herte as wel as in body, and in thought, and mesurable in clothing and in countenaunce, abstinent it etyng and drynkyng, in speche and in dede, and thanne is she the vessel or the box of the blessed Magdaleyne, that fulfillith holy chirche ful of good odour. The thridde maner of chastité is virginité, and it bihoveth that she be holy in herte, and clene of body, and thanne is she spouse of Jhesu Crist, and she is the lif of aungels; she is the preysyng of this world, and she is as these martires in egalité; she hath in hir that tongue may nought telle. Virginité bar oure Lord Jhesu Crist, and virgine was himselve.

Another remedye agayns leccherie is specially to withdrawe such thinges as given occasion to thilke vilonye; as is ease, and etyng, and drynkyng; for certes, whan the pot boylith strongely, the beste remedye is to withdrawe the fyr. Sleping eek longe in gret quiete is also a greet nurse unto leccherie.

Another remedye agains leccherie is, that a man or a womman eschewe the companye of them by whiche he doutith to be tempted; for al be it so that the dede be withstonde, yet is ther gret temptacioun. Sothely a whit wal, although it brenne not fully by stikyng of a candel, yet is the wal blak of the leyte. Ful ofte tyme I rede, that no man truste in his oune perfeccioun, unless he be strenger than Sampson, or holiere than Davyd, or wiser than Salamon.

Now after that I have declared you the seven dedly synnes as I can, and some of there braunches, and there remedyes, sothely, if I coude, I wolde telle yow the ten comaundements, but so high a doctrine I leve to divines. But natheles, I hope to God thay be touchid in this litel tretys everich of them alle.

Now for as moche as the secounde part of penitence stant in confessioun of mouth, as I bigan in the firste chapitre, I say, seint Austyn saith, synne is every word and every dede, and al that men coveyten agayn the lawe of Jhesu Crist; and this is for to synne, in herte, in mouthe, and in dede, by thy fyve wittis, that be sight, heeryng, smellyng, tastyng, or savoryng, or felyng. Now it is good to understonden the circumstaunces that aggreggen moche to every synne. Thou shalt considre what thou art that dost the synne, whethir that thou be mal or femal, old other yong, gentil or thral, fre or servaunt, hool or seek, weddid or sengle, ordrid or unordred, wys or fool, clerk or seculer; if she be of thy kyn, bodily or gostly, or noon; if eny of thy kyndrede have synned with hire or noon, and many mo thinges.

That other circumstaunce is, whether it be don in fornicacioun or in advoutry, or incest or noon, or mayden or noon, in maner of homicide or noon, horrible grete synne or smale, and how long thou hast continued in synne. The thridde circumstaunce is the place wher thou hast don synne, whether in other mennes houses, or in thin owne, in feld, or in chirche, or in chircheyard, in chirche dedicate, or noon. For if the chirche were halewed, and man or womman spillede his kynde withynne that place, by way of synne or by wycked temptacioun, it is enterdited til it be reconsiled by the bishop; and the prest sholde be enterdyted that dede such a vilonye to terme of al his lyf, and sholde no more synge no masse; and if he dede, he shulde do dedly synne, at every tyme that he song masse. The ferthe circumstaunce is, by which mediatours, as by messagers, or for entysement, or for consentement, to bere companye with felawshipe; for many a wrecche, for to bere companye, wol go to the devel of helle. For thay that eggyn or consentyn to the synne, be parteneres of the synne, and of the damnacioun of the synnere. The fyfte circumstaunce is, how many tymes that he hath synned, if it be in his mynde, and how ofte that he hath falle. For he that ofte fallith in synne, despiseth the mercy of God, and encreseth his synne, and is

unkynde to Crist, and he waxith the more feble to withstonde synne, and synneth the more lightly, and the latter arrisith, and is the more eschewe to shrive him, and namely to him that hath ben his confessour. For whiche that folk, whan thay falle agayn to there olde folies, eyther thay forletin her confessours al utterly, or ellis thay departen there shrifte in divers places; but sothely such departed shrifte hath no mercy of God of his synnes. The sixte circumstaunce is, why that a man synneth, as by which temptacioun; and yf himself procure thilke temptacioun, or by excityng of other folk; or if he synne with a womman by force or by hir owne assent; or if the womman maugre hir heed hath ben enforced or noon, this shal she telle, and whether it were for coveytise or for poverté, and if it was hire procuryng or noon, and alle such maner harneys. The seventhe circumstaunce is, in what maner he hath don his synne, or how that she hath suffred that folk have doon to hire. The same shal the man telle pleynly, with alle the circumstaunces, and whether he have synned with commune bordeal womman or noon, or doon his synne in holy tyme or noon, in fastyng tyme or noon, or biforn his shrifte, or after his latter shrifte, and hath paradventure broken therby his penaunce enjoyned therfore, by whos help or by whos counseil, by sorcery or by other craft, al moste be told. Alle these thinges, after thay be grete or smale, add to the consciens of a man; and eek the prest that is the judge, may the better be avysed of his judgement in givyng of thy penaunce, and that is after thy contricioun. For understonde wel, that after the tyme that a man hath defoulde his baptisme by synne, if he wol come to salvacioun, ther is noon other wey but penitence, and shrifte of mouthe, and by satisfaccioun; and namely by those tuo, if ther be a confessour to which he may shryve him, and the thridde if ye have lif to parforme it.

Thanne shal men loke it and considre, that if he wol make a trewe and a profitable confessioun, ther moste be foure condiciouns. First, it moste ben in sorweful bitternesse of herte, as sayde the king Ezechiel to God, I wol remembre me alle the yeres of my lif in bitternes of myn hert. This condicioun of bitternes hath fyve signes; the first is, that confessioun moste be shamefast, not for to covere nor hyde his synne, but for he hath sinned against his God and defoulid his soule. And herof saith seint Augustyn, the herte tremblith for shame of his synne, and for he hath gret shame-

fastnes he is digne to have gret mercy of God. Such was the confessioun of the publican, that wolde nought heve up his eyen to heven, for he had offendid God of heven; for which shamefastnes he had anon the mercy of God. And therefor seith seint Augustyn, that such shamefast folk be next forgevenes of remissioun. The secounde signe is humilité of confessioun; of which saith seint Petre, humblith yow under the might of God; the hond of God is myghty in confessioun, for therby God forgiveth the thy synnes, for he alone hath the power. And this humilité shal be in herte, and in signe outward; for right as he hath humilité to God in his herte, right so shulde he humble his body out-ward to the prest, that sittith in Goddes place. For which in no manere, since that Crist is soverayn, and the prest is his mene and mediatour betwix Crist and the synnere, and the synner is the lasse as by way of resoun, thanne shulde nought the confessour sitte as lowe as the synnere, but the synnere shulde knele biforn him or at his feet, but if maladye distourbid it; for he shal take no keep who sittith there, but in whos place that he sitteth. A man that hath trespassed to a lord, and cometh for to axe him of mercy and to maken his accord, and settith him doun anoon by the lord, men wolde holde him outrageous, and not worthy so soone for to have mercy ne remissioun. The thridde signe is, that thy shrifte shulde be ful of teeris, if men may wepe; and if he may not wepe with his bodily eyen, let him wepe with his herte. Such was the confessioun of seint Peter; for after that he hadde forsake Jhesu Crist, he wente out and wepte ful bitterly. The ferthe signe is, that he lette nought for shame to shryve him and to shewen his confessioun. Such was the confessioun of Magdaleyn, that sparede for no shame of them that were at the feste to go to oure Lord Jhesu Crist and byknowe to him hire synne. The fifte signe is, that a man or a womman be obeisaunt to receyve the penaunce that him is enjoyned. For certis Jhesu Crist for the giltes of one man was obedient to his deth.

The other condicioun of verray confessioun is, that it hastily be doon; for certes, if a man had a dedly wounde, ever the lenger that he tariede to cure himself, the more wolde it corrupte and haste him to his deth, and eek the wounde wolde be the worse to hele. And right so fareth synne, that long time is in a man unshewed. Certes a man oughte soone shewe his synne for many causes; as for drede of deth, that

cometh sodeinly, and he is not certeyn what tyme it shal come, or be in what place; and eek the delaying of oon synne draweth another; and eek the lenger he tarieth, the ferther is he from Crist. And if he abyde unto his laste day, skarsly may he shrive him or remembre him of his synnes, or repente hym for the grevous malady of his deth. And for as moche as he hath not in his lif herkened Jhesu Crist, whan he hath spoken, he shal crien to Jhesu Crist at his laste day, and scarsly wol he herken him. And understonde that this condicioun moste have foure thinges. First thy shrifte moste ben provided byforn, and avysed, for wikked haste doth no profyt; and that a man can shryve him of his synnes, be it of pride or of envye, and so forth alle the species and the circumstances; and that he have comprehendid in his mynde the nombre and the gretnes of his synne, and how longe that he hath leyn in synne; and eek that he be contrit of his sinnes, and in stedefast purpos (by the grace of God) never eft to falle in synne; and eek that he drede and watch himself, and that he flee the occasiouns of synne, to whiche he is enclyned. Also that thou shalt shrive thee of alle thin synnes to oon man, and nat a parcel to oon man, and a parcel to another man; that is, understonde, in entent to parte thy confessioun as for shame or drede, for it nys but strangelyng of thy soule. For certes, Jhesu Crist is enterely al good, in him is noon imperfeccioun, and therfore either he foryiveth al parfitely, or elles never a del. I say nought, if thou be assigned to thy penitencere for certein synne, that thou art bounde to shewe him al the remenaunt of thy synnes, of whiche thou hast ben shryven of thy curate, unless it like the of thin humilité; this is no partyng of schrifte. I say not, when I speke of divisoun of confessioun, that if thou have licence to shryve thee to a discret and to an honest prest, wher thee likith, and eek by the licence of thy curate, that thou ne maist wel shrive thee to him of alle thyn synnes; but let no synne be byhinde untold as fer as thou hast remembraunce. And whan thou shalt thee shrive to thi curate, telle him eeke al thy synne that thou hast doo since thou were last i-shryve. This is no wikkid entent of divisioun of shrifte.

Also thy verrey shrifte askith certeyn condicioun. First, that thou shrive the by thy fre wille, nought constreyned, nor for shame of folk, nor for maladye, or such thing; for it is resoun, that he that trespassith with his fre wille, that by

his fre wille he confesse his trespas; and that noon other man shal telle his synne but himself; ne he shal not naye it or denye his synne, ne wraththe him with the prest for his admonishing to lete synne. The secounde condicioun is, that thy shrifte be laweful, that is to sayn, that thou that shrivest thee, and eek the prest that herith thy confessioun, be verrayly in the feith of holy chirche, and that a man be nought despaired of the mercy of Jhesu Crist, as Caym or Judas. And eek a man moot accuse himself of his owne trespas and not another; but he shal blame and wite himself and his oune malice of his synne, and noon other. But natheless, if that another man be occasioun or ellis enticer of his synne, or that the estate of a persone be such thurgh which his synne aggreggith, or elles that he may not playnly shryve hym but he telle the person with which he hath synned, thanne may he telle it, so that his entent be nought to bakbyte the persone, but oonly to declare his confessioun.

Thow shalt nought eke make no lying in thy confessioun for humilité, paraventure to sayn that thou hast don synnes of whiche thou were never gulty; as seint Augustyn saith, if thou bycause of humilité makest lyings on thiself, though thou were not in synne biforn, yit art thou thanne in synne thurgh thy lyings. Thou most also shewe thy synne by thyn oune proper mouth, but thou woxe dombe, and not by no lettre; for that thou hast don the synne, thou shalt have the shame of the confessioun. Thou shalt noughte peynte thy confessioun, by faire subtil wordes, to cover the more thy synne; for thanne bigilist thou thiself, and not the prest; thou moste telle it platly, be it never so foul nor so horrible. Thou shalt eek shrive thee to a prest that is discrete to counsaile thee; and thou shalt nought shryve thee for veinneglorie, nor for ypocrisie, nor for no cause but only for the doute of Jhesu Crist and the helth of thy soule. Thou shalt not eek runne to the prest sodeinly, to telle him lightly thy synne, as who tellith a tale or a jape, but avysily and with gret devocioun; and generally shrive thee ofte; if thou ofte falle, ofte thou arise by confessioun. And though thou shryve thee ofter than once of synne of which thou hast ben shriven, it is the more merite; and, as saith seint Augustyn, thou shalt have the more lightly relessyng and grace of God, bothe of synne and of payne. And certes once a yer atte lest way it is laweful to be shriven, for sothely once a yer alle thinges in the erthe renovelen.

De Tertia Parte Penitentiæ

Now have I told of verray confessioun, that is the secounde partye of penitence. The thridde partye of penitence is satisfaccioun, and that stondith generally in almesdede and bodily peyne. Now be ther thre maner of almesdede; contricioun of herte, where a man offereth himself to God; the secounde is, to have pité of the defaulte of his neighbor; the thridde is, in geving of good counseil and comfort, gostly and bodily, where men have neede, and namely in sustenaunce of mennes foode. And take keep that a man hath neede of thise thinges generaly, he hath nede of fode, of clothing, and of lodging, he hath neede of charitable counseil and visityng in prisoun and malady, and sepulture of his dede body. And if thou may not visite the needeful with thy persone, visite by thy message and by thy giftes. These be general almesses or werkes of charité, of them that have temporal riches or discrecioun in counselynge. Of these werkes shalt thou hieren at the day of doom.

This almes shalt thou doon of thin oune propur thinges, and hastily, and prively if thou maist; but natheles, if thou maist not do it prively, thou shalt nought forbere to do almes, though men see it, so that it be nought don for thank of the world, but oonly for thonk of Jhesu Crist. For, as witnessith seint Mathewe, a cite may not be hid that is set on a mountayn, nor non men lighten not a lanterne and put it under a busshel, but men sette it on a candel-stikke, to lighte the men in the hous; right so shal youre light lighten biforn men, that they may see youre goode werkes, and glorifien youre Fader that is in heven.

Now as to speke of bodily peyne, it is in prayere, in wakinges, in fastynges, in vertuous techinges. Of orisouns ye shul understonde, that orisouns or prayeres, is for to seyn, a piteous wil of herte, that redressith it in God, and expressith it by word out-ward, to remove harmes, and to have thinges spirituel and durable, and som tyme temporel thinges. Of whiche orisouns, certes in the orisoun of the Pater-noster hath oure Lord Jhesu Crist enclosed most thinges. Certis it is privileged for thre thinges in his dignité, for whiche it is more digne than any other prayer; for Jhesu Crist himself maked it; and it is short, for it shulde be cond the more lightly, and for to withholde it the more esily in herte, and

helpe himselfe the oftere with this orisoun, and for a man shulde be the lasse wery to say it, and for a man may not excuse him to lerne it, it is so short and so easy; and for it comprehendith in itself alle goode prayeres. The exposicioun of this holy praier, that is so excellent and so digne, I bitake to these maystres of theology, save thus moche wol I sayn, whan thou prayest that God shulde forgive thee thy giltes as thou forgivest them that they gilten to thee, be ful wel war that thou be not out of charité. This holy orisoun lesseneth eek venial synne, and therfore it appendith specially to penitence.

This praier moste be trewely sayd, and in verray faith, and that men praye to God ordinatly, discretly, and devoutly; and alway a man shulde putte his wille to be subject to the wille of God. This orisoun moste eek be sayd with greet humblesse and ful pure, and honestly, and nought to the annoyaunce of eny man or womman. It most eek be continued with the werkis of charité. Hit avaylith agayns the vices of the soule; for, as seith seint Jerom, by fastyng ben saved the vices of flessh, and by prayere the vices of the soule.

After this thou shalt understonde, that bodily peyne stant in wakyng. For Jhesu Crist saith, wake and pray, that ye entre not into temptacioun. Ye shul understonde also, that fastynge stout in three thinges, in forbering of bodily mete and drink, and in forberyng of worldly jolité, and in forbering of worldly synne; this is to sayn, that a man shal kepe him fro dedly synne in al that he may.

And thou shalt understonde eek, that God ordeynede fastyng, and to fastyng appurteyn foure thinges: largesse to pover folk, gladnes of hert spirituel: not to be angry nor annoyed nor grucche for he fastith; and also resonable hour for to ete by mesure, that is to sayn, a man shulde not ete in untyme, nor sitte the lenger at his mele, for he fastith.

Thanne shal thou understonde, that bodily peyne stant in discipline, or teching, by word, or by writyng, or by ensample. Also in weryng of heires or of cloth or of haberjeouns on their naked flesh for Cristes sake, and suche maner penaunce; but ware thee wel that such maner penaunce of thyn fleissh make nought thin herte bitter or angry, or anoyed of thiself; for better is to cast away thin hayre than for to caste away the swetnes of oure Lord Jhesu Crist. And therfore seith seint Poule, clothe yow, as thay that be chosen

of God in herte, of misericorde, debonaireté, sufferaunce, and such maner of clothing, of the which Jhesu Crist is more appayed than of haires or of hauberkis.

Than is discipline eek in knokkyng on the brest, in scourgyng with yerdes, in knelynges, in tribulaciouns, in suffring paciently wronges that ben doon to him and eek in pacient sufferaunce of maledies, or losyng of worldly catel, or of wif, or of child, or of othir frendes.

Thanne shalt thou understonde whiche thinges destourben penaunce, and this is in foure thinges; that is drede, shame, hope, and wanhope, that is, desperacioun. And for to speke first of drede, for which he weneth that he may suffre no penaunce, ther agayns is remedye for to thinke that bodily penaunce is but short and litel compared with the peyne of helle, that is so cruel and so long, that it lastith withouten ende.

Now agains the shame that a man hath to shryve him, and namely these ypocrites, that wolde be holde so parfyt that thay have no neede to shryve them; agayns that shame shulde a man thinke, that by way of resoun he that hath not ben ashamed to do foule thinges, certis him oughte not be ashamed to doon faire thinges and goode thinges, and that is confessioun. A man sholde eek thinke, that God seeth and knoweth, alle thy thoughtes, and thy werkes; to him may no thing be hyd nor covered. Men shulde eek remembre them of the shame that is to come at the day of doom, to them that be nought penitent and shriven in this present lif; for alle the creatures in heven and in erthe, and in helle, shuln seen apertly al that they hydith in this world.

Now for to speke of them that be so negligent and slowe to shryve them; it stant in tuo maneres. That oon is, that he hopith for to lyve longe, and for to purchace moche riches for his delyt, and thanne he wol shrive him; and, as he saith, he may, as him semith, tymely y-nough come to shrifte; another is, of the presumption that he hath in Cristes mercy. Agains the firste vice, he shal thinke that oure lif is in no sureness, and eek that al the riches in this world be in adventure, and passen as a shadowe on the wal; and, as saith seint Gregory, that it apperteyneth to the grete rightwisnes of God, that never shal the peyne stynte of them, that never wolde withdrawe them fro synne willingly, but ay continue in synne; for thilke perpetuel wille to doon synne shul thay have perpetuel peyne.

Wanhope is in tuo maneres. The firste wanhope is, in the mercy of Crist; that other is, that thay thinke thay mighte nought longe persever in goodnesse. The firste wanhope cometh of that he demyth that he hath synned so highly and so ofte, and so longe layn in synne, that he shal not be saved. Certis ayens that cursed wanhope shulde he thenke, that the passioun of Jhesu Crist is more strong for to unbynde, than synne is strong for to bynde. Agains the secounde wanhope he shal thinke, that as ofte as he fallith, he may arise agayn by penitence; and though he never so longe have leyn in synne, the mercy of Crist is alway redy to receyve him to mercy. Agains the wanhope that he demeth or he thinketh he shulde not longe persevere in goodnesse, he shal thinke that the feeblenes of the devel may no thing doon, except men wol suffre him; and eek he shal have strengthe of the help of God, and of al holy chirche, and of the protecciouu of aungels, if him list.

Thanne shal men understonde, what is the fruyt of penaunce; and after the word of Jhesu Crist, it is the endeles blisse of heven, where joye hath no contrarieté of wo nor of penaunce nor grevance: where alle harmes be passed of this present lif; where is safety fro the peyne of helle; where is the blisfulle companie that rejoysen them evermore everych of otheres joye; where the body of man, that whilom was foule and derk, is more clere than the sonne; where the body of man that whilom was seek and frel, feble and mortal, is immortal, and so strong and so hool, that ther may no thing impeire it; ther is neyther honger, nor thurst, nor colde, but every soule replenished with the sight of the parfyt knowyng of God. This blisful realm may men purchase by poverté spirituel, and the glorie by lowenes, the plenté of joye by hunger and thurst, and reste by travaile, and the lif by deth and mortificacioun of synne; to thilke lyf he us brynge, that boughte us with his precious blode. Amen.

Preces De Chauceres

Now pray I to yow alle that heren this litel tretis or reden it, that if ther be any thing in it that liketh them, that therof thay may thanke oure Lord Jhesu Crist, of whom procedith alle witte and al goodnes; and if ther be eny thing that displesith them, I pray them that thay arette it to the defaulte of myn unconnyng, and not to my wille, that wolde fayn

have sayd better if I hadde connyng; for the book saith, al that is writen for oure doctrine is writen, and that is myn entent. Wherfore I biseke yow mekely for the mercy of God that ye praye for me, that God have mercy on me and forgeve me my giltes, and nameliche of my translaciouns and endityng in worldly vanitees, whiche I revoke in my retraccioun, as is the book of Troyles, the book also of Fame, the book of twenty-five Ladies, the book of the Duchesse, the book of seint Valentines day and of the Parliment of briddes, the Tales of Caunturbury, alle thilke that sounen into synne, the book of the Leo, and many other bokes, if thay were in my mynde or remembraunce, and many a song and many a leccherous lay, of the whiche Crist for his grete mercy forgive me the synnes. But of the translacioun of Boce de consolacioun, and other bokes of consolacioun and of legend of lyves of seints, and Omelies, and moralitees, and of devocioun, that thanke I oure Lord Jhesu Crist, and his moder, and alle the seintes in heven, bisekyng them that thay fro hennysforth unto my lyves ende sende me grace to biwayle my giltes, and to studien to the salvacioun of my soule, and graunte me grace and space of verray repentaunce, penitence, confessioun, and satisfaccioun, to don in this present lif, thurgh the benigne grace of him, that is king of kynges and prest of alle prestis, that bought us with his precious blood of his hert, so that I may be one of them at the day of doom that shal be saved; *qui cum Patre et Spiritu Sancto vivis et regnas Deus per omnia secula.* Amen.

THE TEMPLE PRESS LETCHWORTH ENGLAND

EVERYMAN.
I WILL GO WITH
THEE.
& BE THY GVIDE
IN THY MOST NEED
TO GO BY THY SIDE

KX-692-953